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GENERAL EDITOR: ARCHIBALD COLQUHOUN

MY PRISONS

Le mie prigioni

SILVIO PELLICO

MY PRISONS

Le mie Prigioni

TRANSLATION, INTRODUCTION, AND NOTES BY

I. G. CAPALDI, S.J.

FOREWORD BY

ARCHIBALD COLQUHOUN

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FOREWORD

It has been said that the best Italian prose between Manzoni's and Verga's novels was autobiographical. The varied accounts of their own experiences by D'Azeglio, Settembrini, Abba, as well as Pellico, were more telling than any fiction produced at the time, with the one exception of Nievo's. Of these Abba's war diaries were the most sparkling, Settembrini's memoirs the most biting. But the major impact on contemporaries was made by Pellico's account of his prison experiences under the Austrians. In innumerable—often pirated—native editions, and more translations than any other book of its time, *Le mie prigioni* a century and a quarter ago aroused controversy and sympathy throughout what was thought of as the civilized world. Within a few years of publication its fame had spread from Pushkin at one end of it to (as an ex-fellow prisoner wrote to the author from New York) the denizens of remote shacks in Alabama.

These reactions, partly political, seem to have been mainly of the heart. There was a climate of sympathy, of course, for the plight of a country which Lamartine shortly before had called *La terre des morts*. Other Italian autobiographies of the time were more eloquent and patriotic; Pellico's, for all its drama, quite undramatic in tone. Moreover its religious content laid it open to a charge of political renunciation. Yet its effect on opinion was remarkable. A story goes that seventeen years after its publication Metternich, who had tried every means of getting it banned even to an organized move for putting it on the Index, said bitterly to the ardent Catholic Veuillot, 'I greatly resent his having made a book of calumny into a book of prayer'. To which Veuillot replied, 'Prince, the book has made its way, with results more terrible for Austria than the loss of a great battle.'

A tough moral fibre lay behind the shyness, the gentleness. No word of political regret or retraction can be found in the

book. The protest, like the affirmation, is basic. Continuously the reader senses an unspoken link between the helpless prisoner's compassion and the machinery of what were, after all, laws judicially correct however cruel. Again and again we are made to feel that only faith saved him from being overwhelmed. It is one of the classic accounts of a religious conversion and its effects, of the *itinerarium mentis in Deum*.

A book so impregnated with religious values is bound to produce exaggerated reactions in the particular reader. 'That lachrymose fellow Pellico', said one of our foremost living *italianisti*. And the contemporary Settembrini, who had attacked Manzoni's *I promessi sposi* for its 'resignation', wrote 'When I read Pellico the book sometimes drops from my hand; that monotony of prison and patience. . . .'

Manzoni was the only contemporary Italian writer so intent on the motions of the soul. But only in this, and in his sense of truth and measure, does he resemble Pellico, whose poetic horizon was far smaller. Pellico's very limitations, those few chords touched delicately, almost sweetly, give his book a quality of its own. Compared to *Le mie prigioni* the great sweep of Nievo in his *Memorie di un ottuagenaro*, splendid as it is, seems an experience on the exterior.

Pellico's book, as Professor Momigliano commented, has an interior richness and unity, a certainty of tone which reveal the true writer. The narrative is scrupulously exact. That underground cell is still to be seen, more or less as Pellico left it, in the castle of Spielberg, now partly a museum. Even the letter which he describes writing in his own blood during the period of his trial has now been found.

Directness and simplicity were the qualities of his writing singled out for praise at the time. A few years before *Le mie prigioni* appeared Stendhal noted 'The great merit of Silvio Pellico is to write Italian with the deep feelings of a Lombard, but with all the naturalness of an inhabitant of Rome or Siena'. We have no record of what Stendhal thought of the style of the religious passages in the book. No doubt it would have been more caustic. The language of piety used by Pellico

was characteristic of the religious climate of the time. Like translation the expression, the touch and tone, of Christian spirituality varies every few generations, and the emphasis of one period does not necessarily apply to the next. How far for the modern reader Pellico's religious expression merely recalls the sentimentalities of early nineteenth-century romanticism, and how effectively it presents truths of universal validity, he must be left to judge. He has the advantage, in Father Capaldi, of a translator who feels very close to the author and transmits his own affection, even in the notes. His version is obviously a labour of love.

ARCHIBALD COLQUHOUN

INTRODUCTION

Silvio Pellico, the author of *Le mie prigioni*, was born at Saluzzo in Piedmont on 25 June 1789. He was therefore a comparatively young man when in 1815 the political movement known as *Il Risorgimento* began to make itself felt and feared by the Austrian authorities in Italy. By the Treaty of Vienna of 1815 the rulers of a Europe in which Napoleon had sown the seeds of rebellion and of the desire for independence, tried to restore the *status quo*. Italy, for instance, was cut up into a number of petty states which were then assigned to various rulers who were all more or less under the thumb or the influence of Austria. The net result of this piecemeal breaking-up of the Italian peninsula was that Austria obtained not only direct control of the provinces of Lombardy and Venice but also indirect control in the affairs of the other Italian states created by the Treaty.

The Italians, however, who under the Napoleonic domination of their country had been inspired with dreams of political freedom and independence, did not take kindly to the new order of things. It was too much to expect that they would once more consent to have the yoke of an absolute and tyrannical government placed round their necks without so much as a murmur of protest. On the other hand it was not easy to see what they could do to voice their indignation and, more important, to shake off the new yoke. Under the despotic governments imposed on them by the Treaty all freedom of thought and of the press was resolutely and ruthlessly suppressed throughout the peninsula, and all rights to hold meetings or to form political associations were denied.

It was inevitable, therefore, that secret societies should begin to pullulate all over the country with the one object of propagating liberal (that is, revolutionary) aspirations and ideals. One of the most important and powerful of these societies was that of the '*Carbonari*' or 'Charcoal-Burners',

whose express aim was to drive the stranger from Italy; to put an end, by fair means and by foul, to the governments set up by the Treaty, and to substitute for them a constitutional monarchy or a republic. The *Carbonari* were responsible for a number of risings between 1815 and 1848 in the Kingdom of Naples, in the Pontifical States, in Piedmont, in Calabria; but little by little their power and influence over the Italian patriots waned and gave place to new political organizations, especially to Mazzini's *Young Italy*.

In 1818 Silvio Pellico, who had moved to Milan in 1809 to rejoin his family after some four years in Lyons and who had made a name for himself there as a poet and playwright—his tragedy, *Francesca da Rimini*, had been a sensational success in 1815—collaborated with Count Luigi Porro Lambertenghi and Count Federico Confalonieri in the foundation of a newspaper, *Il Conciliatore*, to be published twice a week as a counterblast to the *Biblioteca Italiana*, a monthly founded in 1816 by a group of Italian Classicists under the aegis and with the financial backing of the Austrian authorities. The *Conciliatore* was intended by its founders to be the mouthpiece of the Italian Romantics, but although its tone was unmistakably liberal and patriotic from the beginning, the Austrian authorities thought it more prudent not to forbid its publication, at least not immediately. They did however exercise an uncompromising censorship over its contents, so that when the end came, as it did after less than a year, Pellico, who had been the editor and the life of the paper, was only too thankful to be relieved of a thankless task.

The Romantic movement in Italy must not be judged by its counterpart in Germany and Britain. It had, in fact, soon ceased to be the purely literary *sehnsuchtig*, wistful nostalgia for the Middle Ages that it continued to be in those two countries, and became instead, as in France, the expression of the re-awakened aspirations of a down-trodden people to political freedom and independence. To be a Romantic in Italy soon meant therefore to be a Liberal and a patriot.

In October 1819 Pellico was summoned by the authorities

to appear before them at police headquarters. There he was severely reprimanded for the political contents of the *Conciliatore*. At the same time he was given to understand that if he did not mend his ways he would be expelled from Austrian territory (the Lombardo-Veneto), and the newspaper would be suppressed. Pellico passed the warning on to his friends and colleagues who at once decided to stop publication rather than to toe the line that the authorities exacted.

A year later Pellico fell in love with a young actress, for whom he wrote a farce, *La Festa di Bussone*, and who finally agreed to marry him. When, however, Pellico's parents resolutely refused to give their consent he was thrown more and more into the company of a young man, Pietro Maroncelli, who had written the music for the farce, and who was destined to play so large and important a part in the life of Pellico.

Maroncelli, who was an enthusiastic *Carbonaro*, soon prevailed upon his friend to seek consolation for frustrated love in fighting side by side with him to free their country from the despot. Pellico had nothing but contempt for the Carbonaro movement with its puerile, quasi-Masonic tomfooleries and trappings (he had called it, in a letter to his brother Luigi dated 1819, *a rabble, an obscure sect working in the dark*). Yet in the bitterness of his disappointment he allowed himself to be initiated into the movement by Maroncelli, and was then himself responsible for initiating into it a number of his closest friends, among them Count Porro Lambertenghi.

On 6 October 1820 Maroncelli was arrested as a result of a letter that he had written to his brother Francesco in Bologna, but which had fallen into the hands of the police (see note, p. 8). Pellico heard the news two days later when he returned to Milan from a daring journey, or voyage rather, of propaganda with Count Porro, Count Confalonieri, and other *Carbonari* in the steamship *Eridano* between Pavia and Venice. He might have saved himself by flight, but he refused to do so while his friend was in danger. He went instead to Lake Como, where Maroncelli had been shortly before on another journey

of propaganda, destroyed what evidence he could find of Maroncelli's political activities, and returned to Milan on 13 October. That same day he was arrested in the house of Count Porro by the Chief of Police, Count Villata, who had warned him a year before (26 October 1819) to watch his step.

This is the starting point of Pellico's *Le mie prigioni*, the diary of his prison years.

The diary, for various reasons dictated by prudence and delicacy, is a very incomplete account of Pellico's prison experiences. For instance, he says nothing of the incredibly intense cold that he and the rest of the prisoners had to endure in the cells of the Spielberg which were devoid of sunshine and any heating, even in winter. He makes no attempt either to tell his readers what precisely was the nature of the work he had to do in prison. He says nothing of certain matters that Maroncelli thought fit to mention in *his* diary, nor does he really say much about the effect on his health of the extraordinary measures taken by the police to break the spirit of the political prisoners.

It is possible, however, to fill in most of the *lacunae* of the diary from other sources such as the diaries of several of his fellow-prisoners (Maroncelli's, for instance) and the official documents. The picture that finally emerges from Pellico's own account of his experiences as a political prisoner of the Emperor Francis I and from the other sources just mentioned, is of a man who has been utterly purified of dross in the furnace of suffering so bitter that death itself could not be worse. It is in fact the picture of a man coming forth from the tomb of a living death, his body more dead than alive, but his spirit aflame with the fire of Christian forgiveness and charity towards all men, even to those who had buried him alive.

Le mie prigioni saw the light in 1832 and proved to be an immediate and overwhelming success. But it was also attacked on all sides. Austrians, and the friends of Austria among the Italians, professed to be scandalized that Pellico should have thought it necessary to write such a book, and accused him of lying and of exaggerating his own sufferings and the suffer-

ings of his fellow-prisoners. His quondam colleagues, the Liberals and the *Carbonari*, professed to be shocked at the tone of Christian meekness and resignation that speaks from every page of his diary, accused him of being a pacifist, and of betraying the ideals of freedom and independence of his countrymen. Many others, intransigent Catholics, threw doubt on the faith that made him stretch out a hand of forgiveness and friendship to his tormentors, accused him of Jesuitism, and tried to get his book placed on the Index.

Pellico's 'Inferno' had come to an end with his release from the Spielberg. His 'Purgatorio' was to stretch out before him to the end of his days, for the storm that burst over him with the publication of his book showed no signs of abating with the passing of the years. In 1834, in fact, Pellico was moved to protest against the ferocious attacks that were being launched against him.

'Two kinds of fanatics,' he wrote, 'are against me—those who imagine they are Liberals and want at all costs popular and anti-clerical revolts, and those who imagine they are saints and want at all costs persecutions in the name of God. While these wretched little Jacobins or Liberals . . . cry out that if I want to be a man of sound judgement I must become like themselves, and that since I am so completely different from them I am an imbecile and worse, the authors of the *Voce della ragione* . . . cry out that my Christian language is a pretence and . . . that it is a pity I was not hanged . . . I feel sorry for both because the devil of hate has taken possession of their intelligences.'

Yet not all those who rose up in indignation and protested that he no longer loved his country were 'fanatics', for many in Italy were sincerely convinced that the only way to political freedom and independence was still the way that Pellico himself had followed before his arrest, the way of revolt against the despotism of their rulers.

It was perhaps inevitable that Pellico should thus fall foul of these others, former colleagues of his. They, on their part, were to blame for their failure to realise the possibility, nay

the probability and even the certainty, that the liberal ideals of a man like Pellico might undergo a profound transformation during the long years of silence and suffering in prison. He, on his part, was to blame for his failure to understand that the men who now attacked him could not be expected to look at the Italian political scene from his own peculiar and completely personal angle, if for no other reason than that they had not been thrown into dungeons for their efforts to alter that scene by violent means. Nor did he make any move to take from their mouths the bitterness produced by his diary. On the contrary, he left these former colleagues of his in no doubt as to where he now stood in the political arena of their country. 'I am quite out of breath,' he wrote, 'repeating that I love my country every bit as much as you, and probably even more than you, but that I am opposed to all civil strife, mad and fatal as it is, and that I detest the follies which can lead us to it but never to any public good.'

As a matter of fact Pellico had never believed in the use of violence to free his country from the yoke of the despot. Even before his arrest and imprisonment he had maintained in no uncertain language that the political independence of Italy must be the fruit of a slow but inevitable process of enlightenment among the generations to come. This is clearly brought out in his ode, 'A Luigi Porro'. If then he joined the *Carbonari* it was not because he was convinced of the justice of their methods of political intrigue, popular risings and even assassinations but because, as we have already seen, he had been bitterly disappointed in love, and had thus been thrown more and more into the company of Maroncelli for whom he very soon felt a deep and almost passionate friendship. And Maroncelli was an enthusiastic *Carbonaro*.

It was not possible, or at least highly improbable, that in these circumstances the bitter and searing experiences of Pellico's imprisonment with all its burden of sorrow and suffering both for himself and for many others, whom he loved as only a man of his temperament could love them, should not recall him, little by little, to the ideals expressed in his

ode to Count Porro. His new and luminous friendship with Count Oroboni could not, moreover, fail to counterbalance the excessive influence that his older friendship with Maroncelli had exercised over his heart and mind. But it was too much to expect that Pellico's accusers would look with dispassionate eyes on what he wrote in 1837 in his *Capitoli aggiunti* (additional chapters to *Le mie prigioni*) 'The passing of the years has matured my [political] opinions, and modified them without however changing them substantially.'

One by one then his Liberal friends left him until he found himself almost as lonely in his freedom as he had been in his bondage. Other friends he himself turned away from in disgust, as, for instance, from Gioberti, who had none the less been full of praise for *Le mie prigioni* and had dedicated his own *Primato morale e civile degli Italiani* to him, but whose infamous campaign of slander and calumny against the Jesuits he, Pellico, publicly condemned.

He made new friends, it is true, chief among them the Marchese Carlo Tancredi di Barolo and his wife, the pious Juliet Colbert, the Elizabeth Fry of Turin prisons, both of whom surrounded him with the most exquisite kindness to lighten the burden of his solitude and bitterness, and helped him financially. These new friends, however, could not shield him from the sorrow that came from another quarter. In the space of one year (1837–38) Pellico lost both his mother and his father to whom he had been attached with a child-like devotion and love from the first sickly years of his life. Three years later his elder brother Luigi died, while his younger brother Francesco left Turin and went to live in the country, where Pellico was unwilling to follow him. Pellico was thus alone (his sister, Giuseppina, was a nun at Chieri, some twenty miles from Turin) in his sufferings. Francesco continued to help as much as he could financially but he was unable to give the care and attention that his health required. Pellico was, in fact, tormented more and more by terrible fits of asthma and by the deleterious effects of his long imprisonment. Despite all this he continued to write and to publish various tragedies,

a good deal of poetry, and some works in prose, among them his famous *I doveri degli uomini*. These works, however, did not bring him much in the way of money, owing to the dishonesty of editors, so that he was dependent to a great extent on the generosity of his brother and of the Marchese di Barolo.

At this stage in his life (1838) Pellico was invited by the Marchese and his wife to make his home with them. He remained in the di Barolo household until the end of his days. On 31 January 1854 he died, comforted and strengthened by the presence at his side of his sister Giuseppina, to begin, one may hope, his 'Paradiso'.

Few indeed were the Italians, or former friends who were moved to tears by the news of his death, and humble indeed were the funeral rites of the ex-prisoner of the Spielberg, so that when he was taken to his final resting place it was written of him:

Non serici drappi, non ricchi doppieri,
Un'umile bara, sei pallidi ceri,
Fûr l'unica pompa del suo funeral.[1]

But were those six tremulous candles, flickering and guttering round the humble coffin that held his mortal remains, all the splendour and pomp of his funeral? Had he not surrounded himself with a splendour and pomp that would not dim?

The answer must be left to every thoughtful and dispassionate reader of Pellico's masterpiece, for this work at least is a masterpiece. Despite many defects of style and composition, which Pellico himself, writing in 1850 to a friend, admitted; 'I am speaking the truth when I tell you that I feel the numberless defects of the few things I have published. I have loved beauty with a burning love, but I have not known how to capture it in my writings. I do not therefore look on myself as a writer of merit.'

[1] No silken palls, no rich candelabra, [but] a humble bier, six pale tapers, were the sole pomp of his funeral.

No deliberate attempt has been made to eliminate these defects in this translation, but I hope that the intelligent reader will not attribute to Pellico defects not of the author but of the translator.

I have tried to maintain throughout Pellico's own peculiarly simple style which is so strikingly effective. The *Capitoli aggiunti*, mentioned above (p. xix), add nothing to *My Prisons* that could interest the ordinary English reader. These 'additional chapters', as Pellico called them, consist of twelve short pieces of a purely autobiographical nature—they were, in fact, part of his autobiography—which were published for the first time, in French, in 1843, and in Italian in 1856. They were evidently intended to put the final touch to the Diary, as well as to give some explanation of it. Pellico, however, soon recognised that he had made a mistake. The new chapters raised new storms, so that he refused to allow them to be published in Italian.

I have taken the substance of most of the footnotes to my translation from the critical edition of *Le Mie Prigioni* by Andrea Gustarelli mentioned in the Bibliographical Note; and most of the material in this Introduction from the other work by the same author: *La Vita*, etc., also mentioned in the Bibliographical Note.

I wish to express my gratitude to the learned author of these two books and to his publishers for their kind permission to avail myself of the fruits of their labours.

My thanks are also due to friends who have been unstintingly generous in their help and encouragement.

I. G. CAPALDI, S.J.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

WITHIN two years of *Le mie prigioni*'s first publication in 1832 there were two translations published in French, eventually going up to twenty-two in that language. The first translations in English came in 1835 (one published in America), followed within a decade by translations in German, Spanish, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Dutch, and in more recent years Swedish and Hungarian. The latest translation to appear was in Afrikaans, published in Johannesburg in 1945. Eight English translations in all are listed at the British Museum, the last in 1859. Of these the one of 1835, by Thomas Roscoe, was last republished in 1915.

In Italy the printing of *Le mie prigioni* since 1832 has averaged six editions a year, eight in 1920, dropping to two or three during the war years 1941–45 and picking up since. Most of these later editions were for schools, where the book is on every curriculum, and some for Italian prisoners of war abroad.

There are a number of editions with commentaries. Of these the one preferred by the translator has a commentary by Andrea Gustarelli (Sansoni, Florence, 1917).

One with introduction, commentary, and notes by Giuseppe Molpurgo contains in the new revised edition the original text of the additional chapters, which were found at the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, in 1932. Most of this book is a reprint of the first edition of 1906 (Mondadori, Milan, 1961).

Of other works by Pellico the following are in print:

I doveri degli uomini e La Francesca da Rimini, with introduction by Prof. D'Ovidio and biographical notes by Michele Scherillo (Hoepli, Milan, 1932).

Anthology: *Le più belle pagine di Silvio Pellico*, chosen by Grazia Deledda (Milan, 1934).

Biographies: *La Vita, 'Le mie prigioni' e 'I doveri degli uomini' di Silvio Pellico*, by Andrea Gustarelli (Sansoni, Florence, 1917); *La vita di Silvio Pellico*, by Barbara Allason (Mondadori, Milan, 1933).

AUTHOR'S FOREWORD

Man born of woman, living for a short time,
is filled with many miseries.

Job xiv. 50

Has my motive for writing these memories been vanity, a desire to speak of myself? I hope not, and in so far as any man may set himself up as judge of his own actions I feel that I have had some better ends in view.

I wanted, that is, to help console some unhappy creature by this account of the evils that I suffered and of the consolations that, as I know from my own experience, a man can find amid the greatest misfortunes; to bear witness that in the course of my own long sufferings I did not find humanity so wicked, so unworthy of forgiveness, so devoid of excellent souls as it is usually made out to be; to inspire the noble-minded with a warm love for one another, to hate no one, but have an irreconcilable hatred only for vulgar pretension, mean-spiritedness, treachery, and all moral degradation; and finally to reassert a truth already well known but often forgotten: that Religion, no less than Philosophy, calls for energy of will and tranquillity of judgement, and that without these two together there can be neither justice nor dignity nor sure and stable principles.

I

THE ARREST

On Friday,[1] 13 October 1820, I was arrested in Milan and taken to the Santa Margarita prisons. It was then three o'clock in the afternoon.

I was questioned at length all that day and for many other days, but I am not going to say anything about those interrogations. Instead, like a lover who has been ill-treated by his beloved and who is determined to maintain an attitude of dignified aloofness towards her, I intend to leave politics alone and speak of other matters.

At nine o'clock in the evening of that unlucky Friday the police officer in charge handed me over to a warder who led me to the cell assigned to me, and there asked me politely to give him my watch, money, and everything else in my pockets, assuring me that they would be given back to me in due course.

He then wished me a respectful good night.

'Hey just a minute, my good man!' I protested, 'I've had no dinner today. See I'm brought some food, will you?'

'Certainly, sir. The inn is close by. You will see, sir, what a good wine they stock!'

'Wine? I don't touch it.'

At this the warder, whose name was Angiolino, looked at me in alarm, hoping I was joking. Prison-warders who run taverns as a side-line shudder at the thought of a prisoner who does not drink.

'No, really. I never touch it!'

[1] Friday looms large in the life of Pellico. It was on a Friday, five years before his arrest, that his play, *Francesca da Rimini*, was acclaimed by the Milanese. He was arrested on a Friday. And on a Friday he returned home, a free man. Pellico, however, protests that he is not superstitious (see p. 85).

'Well I'm sorry for your own sake. You'll feel twice as lonely. . . .'

On seeing that I was not going to change my mind he left the cell. In less than half an hour I got my dinner. I gulped down a few mouthfuls, swallowed a glass of water, and was left alone.

The cell was on the ground floor, and looked on to a courtyard. There were cells all round me, cells above, cells opposite, everywhere cells.

I leaned my elbows on the window-sill and stood there for some time listening to the measured tread of warders up and down, and to the hysterical singing of a number of prisoners.

A hundred years ago, I mused, this was a convent. Did the holy and mortified virgins who lived here ever imagine that one day their cells would resound not with laments and hymns but with blasphemies and ribald songs, and that they would hold men of every sort, for the most part condemned to life-imprisonment or to the gallows? Who will be living in these cells in a hundred years' time? The transitoriness of time, the unceasing changeableness of all things! What man contemplating you can grieve if fortune no longer smiles on him, if he is buried in a prison cell, if he is threatened with the gallows?

Yesterday I was among the happiest of men. Today not one of the sweet consolations of life is mine! Freedom, the company of friends, hopes, they have all vanished. No, it would be folly to deceive myself. I shall never leave this place unless to be thrown into the foulest dungeon or handed over to the executioner!

And yet, the day after my death I might have died in a palace and been carried to the grave with the greatest of honours.

These reflections on the swift passing of time gave me courage; but suddenly the faces of my father and mother, of my two brothers and two sisters, of another family[1] that I loved as

[1] This was the family of Count Luigi Porro Lambertenghi, his employer and intimate friend. Pellico had entered into the Count's service in 1816 as private secretary and tutor to his two boys, Giulio and Giacomo. In Lambertenghi's magnificent house in Milan he met many of the most famous personages of the age.

if it were my own, rose up before my mind. The arguments of Philosophy were no longer of any help.

Deeply moved, I wept like a child.

2

MY LAST JOURNEY TO TURIN

THREE months before I had gone to Turin where after several years of separation I had once again seen my beloved parents, one of my brothers, and my two sisters. We had always been deeply attached to one another in our family. No son had been treated better by father and mother than I.

How deeply, then, I had been moved when, on seeing my parents again, I had found them so much more weighed down with age than I had expected. How I longed never to leave them again but to devote myself to lightening the burdens of their old age. How grieved I was that during my few days in Turin I had to attend to duties which took me from my parents' home so that I could give such little time to the dear old couple.

My poor mother used to say, in fact, sadly and bitterly: 'Alas, our Silvio hasn't come to Turin to see *us*!'[1]

The separation on the morning I left for Milan was most painful. My father stepped into the carriage with me and accompanied me for a mile or two. Then he turned back all alone. With tears in my eyes, kissing a ring that my mother had given to me, I kept on turning round to look after him. Never before had I felt such anguish at leaving my parents. Since I do not believe in presentiments I was amazed at not being able

[1] As a matter of fact Pellico had gone to Turin with Count Porro's sons to see his old friend Lodovico di Breme who was dying (see footnote 4, p. 40). At the same time, however, it is fairly safe to say that this visit was not unconnected with the insurrection that was being prepared in Piedmont by the Italian Liberals.

The visit, incidentally, took place in June, and thus *four* months before Pellico's arrest, not three as stated in the text.

to overcome my sorrow, and was forced to ask myself in alarm: 'Whence this extraordinary uneasiness?'

It was as if I foresaw some great misfortune.

That terror, that anguish too, now came back to me as I stood at the window of my cell. And so did all the words that I had heard three months before from the lips of my parents. That lament of my mother's: 'Alas, our Silvio did not come to Turin to see *us*!' fell heavy as lead on my heart. I blamed myself for not having shown them far more affection. I loved them so much, and told them so feebly! I would never see them again, yet had seen so little of their beloved faces! I had been so niggardly with proofs of my affection!

These thoughts wrung my heart. I closed the window and paced my cell for an hour thinking there would be no sleep for me that night. Then I lay down and weariness sent me to sleep.

3

THE AWAKENING

It is a terrible experience to awaken during a first night in prison.

'Is it possible,' I said as I remembered where I was, 'is it possible? I, here? Then I am not dreaming now? They did arrest me yesterday? Yesterday they put me through that long interrogation which will go on tomorrow and who knows how long after? Was it not last night that I cried so much before I fell asleep, thinking of my parents?'

The rest, the perfect silence, the short sleep that had refreshed my mental faculties seemed to have increased my power of sorrow a hundredfold. In the complete absence of distractions, the anguish of all my dear ones, and especially of my father and mother when they heard the news of my arrest, imprinted itself on my imagination with unbelievable force.

'At this moment,' I said to myself, 'they're still sleeping peacefully, or are perhaps awake thinking lovingly of me, with

no presentiment of the place where I am. How much better if God took them from this world before news of what's happened to me reaches Turin! Who can give them strength to bear this blow?'

A voice inside me seemed to answer: 'He who is invoked by all in affliction, loving and feeling His presence in themselves! He who gave a Mother strength to follow her Son to Golgotha and to stand beneath His Cross. The Friend of the unhappy, the Friend of mortal men.'

It was the first time that religion won over my heart; and this blessing I owe to my love for my parents. In the past I had paid scant and careless attention to religion without being opposed to it. The common objections with which it is usually attacked did not seem to amount to much,[1] but a thousand sophistical doubts had weakened my faith. For a long time now these doubts had no longer been about the existence of God, and I had kept on telling myself that if God did exist, a necessary consequence of His justice was another life for anyone suffering in a world so unjust. Hence the supreme reasonableness of aspiring to the good things of that other life; hence the need of fostering a love of God and one's neighbour, a continual striving to ennoble oneself by means of generous sacrifices.

For a long time I had kept on telling myself all this, and then adding: 'What else is Christianity if not this continual aspiration?'

I had often wondered, too, how at a time when the essence of Christianity was showing itself so pure, so philosophical, so beyond attack, Philosophy should dare to say: 'From now on I shall take your place!'

'But how will you take its place?' (I would ask). 'By teaching vice? No, certainly not! By teaching virtue? Very well then, but that will be to teach the love of God and of one's neighbour. It will be precisely what Christianity teaches!'

[1] Pellico, however, did give up at least the practice of his Faith from about the age of sixteen (when he went to live with an uncle in Lyons) to the year of his arrest; that is from 1805 to 1820. He does not appear ever to have lost his belief in the existence of God.

Despite the fact that I had felt like this for several years I had always evaded the conclusion: be logical then, be a Christian! Don't be scandalized any longer by its abuses! Stop maligning this or that difficult point of the Church's teaching, because the chief point is this one, and it is as clear as daylight; *love God and your neighbour.*

It was in prison that I finally decided to draw this conclusion, and I did so. I hesitated a little, thinking that if so and so got to know that I was more religiously minded than before my arrest he might consider me a hypocrite, crushed by misfortune. But knowing in myself that I was neither a hypocrite nor crushed by misfortune, I made up my mind not to heed any possible but unmerited reproaches and resolved henceforth to be and to declare myself a Christian.

4

THE UNDER-WARDER TIROLA

I REMAINED firm in this resolution later on but I began to turn it over in my mind and almost to will it during that first night in prison. Towards morning my agitation calmed down, which surprised me. I thought again of my parents and my other dear ones and no longer despaired of their strength of soul, while the memory of goodness I had seen in them at other times comforted me.

Why had I felt such agitation before when trying to imagine theirs, and now such faith in their courage? Was this happy transformation a miracle? Was it a natural effect of my reborn belief in God? But what does it matter whether we call miracles or not the very real and sublime benefits of religion?

At midnight two under-warders had come to visit me and found me in very ill humour. When they came back at dawn I was calm and in a mood for banter.

'Last night, sir,' said one of them named Tirola, 'you had a face like a basilisk! Now you're quite different, and I'm glad

because it is a sign that you are not (excuse the expression, sir), a rogue, since all rogues (I'm an old hand and my observations carry some weight, sir), all rogues are angrier the second night after their arrest than they are the first. Do you take snuff, sir?'

'Not usually, but I don't want to refuse your kindness. As for your observation, it is not, if I may say so, what one might expect from a wise man such as you seem to be. If this morning I've no longer a face like a basilisk might not the change be proof of callousness, of a facility for self-deception, for dreaming of freedom at hand?'

'I might think that, sir, if you were in prison for other reasons. But nowadays when it's for affairs of state things are bound to drag on! And you're no simpleton to think they won't. You will forgive me, sir, I hope. Another pinch?'

'All right. But tell me. How can anyone look so happy as you who's always among wretches?'

'Let's say it's indifference to the sufferings of others. But to tell the truth I don't know for certain myself. I can assure you, though, that often it hurts me to see others weep. And sometimes I pretend to be happy to make poor prisoners smile too!'

'It's struck me for the first time, friend, that one can do a warder's job and be a very good fellow.'

'The job doesn't come into it at all, sir. On the other side of that big archway you see beyond the courtyard is another courtyard with more cells, all for women. They are . . . I need not tell you . . . loose women. Well, sir, some among them are angels, at heart. And if you were an under-warder. . . .'

'I?' And I burst out laughing.

Tirola was disconcerted by my laughter and did not go on. Perhaps he had wanted to say that if I had been an under-warder I could easily have become attached to one of those unfortunate creatures.

He asked me what I should like for breakfast, went out, and a minute or two later brought me some coffee.

I kept my eyes fixed on his with a mischievous smile that

meant: 'Would you be willing to take a note to another unhappy soul, to my friend Piero?'[1]

He answered me with another smile that said: 'No, sir! And if you apply to one of my colleagues and he says "Yes", take care, for he'll betray you.'

I am not really sure that he understood me or I him; but I do know that a dozen times I was on the point of asking him for a sheet of paper and a pencil and did not dare, because there was something in his eyes that seemed to be warning me not to trust anyone, least of all himself.

5

DRASTIC PUNISHMENT

If Tirola, for all his expression of kindliness, had not had also that very sly look, if his features had been nobler, I should have yielded to the temptation to make him my messenger. Who knows but that a note from me handed in time to my friend might have given him strength to correct mistakes, and this might have saved not him, poor man, for too much had already been found out, but several others and myself?

Ah well, patience! It could not be helped.

I was summoned for more interrogation, which lasted all that day and for several other days with no break except for meals.

Until the end of the trial, however, the days went by on wings, such was the activity of my mind both in answering un-

[1] This was Pietro Maroncelli, Pellico's most intimate friend. Himself a perfervid *Carbonaro*, he initiated Pellico into the secret society of republican revolutionists known as the *Carbonari* (Introduction, pp. xiii–xiv and p. xv). Maroncelli was arrested on 6 October 1820 and it was because of a stupid piece of bungling by him that Pellico and many others were later arrested. A letter of his to his brother, also a *Carbonaro*, full of incriminating evidence and containing the names of many of his political friends, among them Pellico's, was handed to the police by a tailor named Giovanni Pirotti to whom he had entrusted it to carry to his brother in Bologna. But see footnote, p. 190.

endingly such varied questions, and in collecting my thoughts during dinner and at night to think over what they had asked me and I had replied, and everything I might still be questioned on.

At the end of the first week a most unfortunate thing happened. My poor friend Piero, anxious as I to get into touch, sent me a note, making use not of the under-warders but of an unfortunate prisoner who came with them and did odd jobs in our cells. He was a man of between sixty and seventy years of age, condemned to I know not how many months of imprisonment.[1]

Using a pin that I had on me, I pricked a finger and with the blood wrote out a few lines in reply which I gave to the messenger. He was unlucky enough, however, to be spied on, searched, and caught with my note in his possession and, if I am not mistaken, given the bastinado. I heard high-pitched screams which seemed to me to come from the unfortunate old man and I never saw him again.

When brought before my questioners I was horrified to have the note written in my blood handed to me. Thank Heaven it mentioned nothing that could injure anyone, and looked a simple note of greeting. They asked me how I had drawn blood from myself, took away my pin, and laughed mockingly at us who had been made to look so foolish. But I did not laugh. I could not drive the old messenger's face away from before my eyes. I was willing to suffer any punishment if only they would let him off. When those screams reached me which I guessed to be his I was deeply grieved.

I made inquiries about him several times from the warder and under-warders, but in vain. They would shake their heads and say:

'He has paid dearly for it, that one has!'

'He won't do such a thing again!'

'He's enjoying a little rest!'

[1] In reality he was only fifty, but as he had already been in prison for two and a half years there was some reason for Pellico's impression that he was so much older. He too was a political prisoner named Giovanni Sommaruga.

Nor would they say more. Were they hinting at solitary confinement in which the poor wretch was being held, or were they speaking in this way because he had died under the bastinado or as a result of it?

One day I thought I saw him beyond the courtyard and under the portico with a bundle of firewood on his shoulders. My heart jumped as if I were seeing my own brother again.

6

CONSOLATION FROM THE SCRIPTURES

When I was no longer tortured by interrogations and had nothing to occupy my days I began to feel the bitter weight of solitude. It is true that I was allowed to have a copy of the Bible and of Dante, and it is also true that the warder put at my disposal his own library consisting of some novels by Scudèry, Piazzi,[1] and worse; but my mind was too agitated to apply itself to any kind of reading. I used to learn a canto of Dante by heart every day, but even this exercise was so mechanical that I carried it out with thoughts less on those verses than on my own misfortunes.

It was the same when I read anything else except sometimes certain passages of the Bible. This divine Book, which even when I thought myself an unbeliever I had always deeply loved, I now studied with more reverence than ever before. Even so, however, in spite of my good will I used to read it very often with my mind on other things, and did not understand it. But little by little I became able to meditate on it more firmly and to savour it more and more.

This reading did not give me the slightest tendency towards bigotry, by which I mean that mistaken piety which makes a

[1] Magdalene de Scudèry (1607–1701) was a writer of romances, while Piazzi (Pellico very likely means Antonio *Piazza*) was a Venetian writer of romances and comedies.

man faint-hearted or fanatical. It taught me on the contrary to love God and man, to long more and more for the Kingdom of justice, to abhor evil, and forgive evil-doers. Instead of destroying what good Philosophy might have already worked in me, Christianity confirmed it, strengthened it with loftier and more potent arguments.

One day after I had read that we must pray without ceasing and that true prayer is not to mutter many words as the heathen do but to worship God in simplicity of word and action so that both are fulfilments of his Holy will, I resolved to begin this unceasing prayer in earnest, by not allowing myself a single thought except those animated by desire to conform to the decrees of God.

The set form of prayers that I used to recite in adoration of God were always few, not out of contempt for them (for I believe on the contrary that they are very useful, in varying degrees to fix one's attention during the liturgy), but because I feel myself so made that I am not capable of reciting many such prayers without wandering off into distractions and forgetting the very notion of worship.

My resolution to remain always in the presence of God, far from being a laborious effort of the mind and a source of fear, was for me most consoling. By not forgetting that God is always near us, that He is in us, or rather that we are in Him, solitude lost its terrors for me day by day.

'Am I not in the best of company?' I would say to myself. And so I kept cheerful, humming and whistling away from spiritual consolation.

'Why,' I used to think, 'might not a fever have swooped on me and carried me off to the grave? All my dear ones, in grief at losing me would gradually have found strength to resign themselves to the loss. Instead of a grave, a prison has swallowed me up. Will God not strengthen them with equal grace?'

Earnest prayers for them would rise from my heart, sometimes with tears; but my tears were themselves mingled with sweetness. I had full trust that God would support both them and me. Nor was I deceived.

7

THE LITTLE DEAF-MUTE

To live at liberty is (and who can doubt it?) much better than to live in prison. Yet the joy of living can be felt even amid the miseries of a prison by one who considers that God is present there, that the joys of this world are transitory, that the real good is to be found not in external objects but in a man's conscience.

As for me, in less than a month I had come to a decision, not perfectly I admit, but tolerably well. I foresaw that unless I was to be guilty of the unworthy action of buying my own impunity by bringing about the ruin of others, my fate could only be the gallows or a long imprisonment. I had to make the best of it.

'I will go on breathing while they leave a breath in me,' I said to myself, 'and when they take it away I'll do what every sick person does when he reaches the final moment: I'll die!'

I tried not to complain of anything and to give my soul every possible reason for rejoicing. The most usual of these was to pass over in my mind one by one the blessings that had made my days happy: a very good father, a very good mother, excellent brothers and sisters, such and such friends, a sound education, my love for literature, and so on. Who had been blessed with happiness more than I? Why then not thank God for it, even if now it was tempered with misfortune? Sometimes when going through this list of my blessings I would feel myself moved to tears for an instant; then courage and gladness returned.

I had made a friend from the very first days in prison. This was neither the warder, nor any of the under-warders; not even any of the gentlemen who questioned me. Yet I am speaking of a human being. Who was it then? A child, deaf and dumb, some five or six years old. His father and mother had been thieves and the law had struck them down. The poor

little orphan was being kept by the prison authorities together with some other children similarly placed. They all lived in a room opposite to mine, and at certain hours the door was thrown open for them so that they could come out into the courtyard for a breath of fresh air.

The deaf-mute used to come under my window where he would smile and make signs to me. I would throw him a big hunk of bread which he caught with a leap of joy, and then ran off with it to his companions to each of whom he gave a little, after which he would come back to eat his own tiny share near my window, expressing his gratitude by the smile of his beautiful eyes.

The other children used to look on from a distance, but never dared to draw nearer. The deaf-mute had a deep affection for me, and it wasn't only cupboard love, either! There were times when he did not know what to do with the bread that I threw to him, and he used to make signs to me that he and his companions had made a good meal and could not eat any more. If at such times he saw an under-warder coming to my cell he used to give him the bread to hand back to me. Although he could not expect anything else from me at such times he went on romping in front of my window with the most attractive grace, happy that I could see him.

Once an under-warder allowed the child to come into my cell. Hardly had he entered than running to me he threw his arms round my legs and cried with joy. I took him up into my arms where he, in transports of joy, covered me with caresses. How much love in that dear little soul, and how I should have liked to get him educated and save him from the degrading place in which he was!

I never got to know his name. He himself did not know if he had one. Yet he was always happy and I never saw him cry except once when, for some reason unknown to me, he was spanked by the warder.

How strange! To live in such a place would seem to be the very extreme of misfortune, yet I am sure that that child enjoyed all the happiness that a son of a prince could have at

his age. Reflecting thus, I learned that a man can make his state of mind independent of place. Control our imaginations, and we can be happy almost anywhere. The day is soon over, and when at night one goes to bed free from hunger and sharp pain, what does it matter if the bed is between walls that are called *prison*, or between walls that are called *home* or *palace*?

Excellent reasoning this! But how does one control imagination? I used to try and seemed at times to be wonderfully successful: but at other times its tyranny got the upper hand, and I would be vexed and astonished at my own weakness.

8

CHANGE OF CELL

'Even in my misfortune,' I used to say to myself, 'I am at least fortunate in that they have given me a cell on the ground floor, looking out on to this courtyard, where that little child can come to within a few feet of me, and I can speak to him without words but so consolingly.

'How wonderful is the intelligence of man! How much we can tell one another, he and I, by the variety of expressions in our eyes and faces! How gracefully he controls all his movements when I smile at him! How he corrects them when he sees that they do not please me! How he understands that I love him whenever he is kind, or gives some gift to his companions! No one outside even imagines he exists, and yet I, by standing at my window, can be a sort of teacher to the poor little fellow. By dint of repeating certain signs we shall be able to communicate our thoughts perfectly. The more he feels that he is learning from me and becoming more and more refined the more will he attach himself to me. I shall be for him the genius of reason and of goodness. He will learn to trust me with all his sorrows, his joys, his longings, and I to comfort him, to ennoble him, to guide him in all his behaviour. Who knows that if my case is going to be left undecided from month

to month they will not leave me here to grow old? Who knows if that child will not grow up under my eyes and be employed here in some way? With all the intelligence he seems to have, what may he not turn out to be? Alas; no more than a good under-warder or something of the kind.

'Even so, shan't I have done a good job if I've encouraged in him a desire to please honest folk and himself, helped to form a habit of gentle feeling?'

This soliloquizing was very natural. I have always been attracted to children, and the position of teacher had always seemed to me sublime. I had filled such a position for several years with Giacomo and Giulio Porro, two youngsters of bright promise whom I had loved like sons and would go on loving as sons for ever. God knows how many times I thought of them while in prison, how much I grieved at not being able to finish their education, how many earnest prayers I offered up that they might find another teacher who would be my equal in loving them!

There were times when I exclaimed to myself: 'What an ugly parody this is! Instead of Giacomo and Giulio, children adorned with the charms and splendours that nature and fortune can give, I get for a pupil the wretched deaf-and-dumb, ragged little son of a thief! One moreover who at the most will become an under-warder, or what would be less politely called a *sbirro*!'[1]

These reflections used to disconcert and discourage me. But I had only to hear the shrill cry of my little deaf-mute to feel the blood coursing through my veins as a father might at the sound of his child's voice. That shrill cry and the sight of him swept from my mind every base thought about him.

'Is it his fault that he's ragged and physically handicapped and the son of thieves? A human soul in the age of innocence is always to be respected.'

So I told myself; and looked on him with greater love every day, while it seemed to me that his intelligence was developing

[1] I have preferred to leave this word as it is, as there seems to be no English equivalent. A '*sbirro*' is colloquial Italian for policeman.

and confirming me in my plan to devote myself to improving him. And allowing my imagination to run riot I thought that perhaps some day I should come out of prison and have the chance to put the child into a school for deaf-mutes and thus set him on the road to a future more attractive than that of a *sbirro*.

And as I was occupied in this pleasant manner with his welfare two under-warders came for me one day.

'You are changing quarters.'

'What do you mean by that?'

'We have orders to transfer you to another cell.'

'Why?'

'Some other big bird's been caught, and since this is the best cell . . . well . . . you understand. . . .'

'I understand. This is the first halt for new arrivals.'

So they transferred me to a cell on the opposite side of the courtyard but, alas, not on the ground floor, not in a position from where I could speak to the little deaf-mute.

On my way across the courtyard I saw him sitting on the ground, surprised and sad. He realized he was losing me. After a moment's hesitation he sprang to his feet and ran to me. The under-warders wanted to drive him away but I gathered him in my arms and, dirty as he was, kissed him tenderly again and again, and then tore myself away from him (must I say it?) with tears streaming from my eyes.

9

THE NEW CELL

POOR heart of mine, that falls into love so easily and so tenderly, to how many separations have you not been condemned already? This was by no means the least sorrowful, and I felt it all the more deeply since my new quarters were wretched in the extreme. A den of a cell, dark and foul, its window with panes not of glass but of paper, its walls soiled by coarse and clumsy drawings in a colour that I would not care to

identify. The parts that had not been painted on were covered with scribblings. Many of these had simply the name, surname, and native place of some unfortunate man, with the date of the fatal day of his arrest. Others added the writer's curses against false friends, against the judge, and so forth. Others again were thumb-nail autobiographies. Some contained moral reflections, these words of Pascal among them:

'Those who attack religion should at least learn what it is before they attack it. If religion boasted of having a clear vision of God or of possessing Him as He is, to attack it, it would be enough to say that *there is nothing in the universe which reveals Him with so much evidence*. But since on the contrary it says that men are in darkness and far from God Who has hidden Himself from their knowledge, and that the name which He gives Himself in the Scriptures is precisely that of *Deus Absconditus*, the hidden God . . . what advantage can they claim when in their admitted neglect of the science of truth they cry out that the truth has not been demonstrated to them?'

A little below these words were others from the same author: 'This is not a matter of the unimportant well-being of some stranger. It concerns ourselves and our all. The immortality of the soul is something of such importance, and concerns us so deeply, that a man must be out of his senses to be indifferent about learning what it is.'

Another writing said: 'I bless this prison because it has made me know the ingratitude of man, my own misery, and the goodness of God.'

Beside these humble words were the violent and proud imprecations of someone who called himself an atheist and inveighed against God as if forgetting he had said there was no God. After a column of such blasphemies there was another of insults against the *cowards*, as the writer called them, whom the misfortune of prison turns into pious old women.

I showed these last villainies to one of the under-warders and asked him who had written them.

'I'm glad to have found these scribblings', he said. 'There are lots, and I've so little time to look for them.'

And without further ado he started to scrape the walls with a knife to remove the writing.

'Why that?' I asked.

'Because the poor devil who wrote these words and was condemned to death for premeditated murder, regretted writing them and got someone to ask me to do him this kindness.'

'God forgive him!' I exclaimed. 'What murder did he commit?'

'He could not kill an enemy of his. So he took his vengeance by killing the man's son, the loveliest little boy!'

I shuddered. Can human ferocity go so far then? And this monster had used the arrogant language of one who was above all human weaknesses. He who had slaughtered an innocent person, a child.

IO

THE NEW ARRIVAL

In the deep gloom and filth of that new cell, deprived as I was of the company of my beloved deaf-mute, I was overwhelmed with sadness. I used to stand for many hours at the window which looked out over a gallery, beyond which I could see a courtyard and the window of my first cell.

'Who has taken my place over there?' I asked myself, for I could see a man who would walk a great deal up and down the cell with the quick steps of one full of agitation. Two or three days after his arrival I noticed that he had been given writing materials; and from that moment he sat all day at the small table.

At last I recognized him as he was leaving the cell accompanied by an under-warder for interrogation. It was Melchior Gioia[1]!

[1] Well known in Italy as a scientist, economist, and philosopher, Gioia's (1767–1829) political sympathies were entirely with the group of Liberals

Anguish filled me. 'You here too, you of all people, my dear fellow!' (He was more fortunate than I, for after a few months in prison he was freed.)

The sight of any good person consoles me, warms me, makes me think. And it is a great blessing to think and to love. I would have given my life to save Gioia from prison; yet the sight of him there was a comfort.

After I had watched him for a long time, trying to guess from his movements whether he was calm or agitated, and praying for him, I began to feel an accession of strength, of ideas, of peace of mind. This proves that the mere sight of a human being whom we love is enough to temper our solitude. This blessing was first brought me by a poor dumb child and now it came from the distant view of a man of great quality.

One of the under-warders must have told him where I was. One morning he opened his window and waved a handkerchief in greeting. I waved back. The happiness that flooded into my heart at that moment! I felt that distance had been annihilated, that we were together. My heart was throbbing like a lover's at the sight of his beloved. We made signs without understanding one another but with the same eagerness as if we did; or rather we really understood; those signs meant all that was in our hearts, and one knew what the other was feeling.

What a comfort, I thought, those greetings would be for me in the future! But the future came, and they were never repeated. Every time I saw Gioia at his window I waved my handkerchief. But in vain. The under-warders told me that he had been forbidden to provoke any gestures from me or to answer them. Yet he looked at me often and I looked at him, and in this way we still told each other many things.

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who founded (in September 1818) and wrote for *Il Conciliatore* (see Introduction, p. xiv) to disseminate their political ideas. He did not, however, collaborate in the publication of this paper, but this did not save him from arrest as a *Carbonaro*. After seven months in prison he was set free (see p. 191).

II

MADDALENA

ALONG the gallery under my window and on the same level as my cell other prisoners, accompanied by under-warders and going to or coming from interrogation, used to pass from morning to night. They were, for the most part, men of low condition, but I noticed one or two who appeared to be of some social standing. Though I could not keep them under observation for long, so swiftly did they pass, yet they always caught my eye; and all moved me to compassion in varying degrees. The sad sight increased my sufferings during the first few days, but little by little I became used to it until in the end it, too, lessened the horror of my solitude.

Many women prisoners also passed in front of my eyes. From the gallery, in fact, you could go under an archway to reach another courtyard above with cells for women; and a hospital for the syphilitics among them. A solitary wall, and a very thin one at that, separated me from one of these cells, so that I was often deafened by the songs, and sometimes by the quarrels, of its unhappy occupants. Late at night when all other noises had ceased I could hear them talking among themselves. Had I been so inclined I could have entered into conversation with them, but I refrained from doing so, whether out of shyness or pride, or from a prudent care not to link myself to fallen women I do not know. It must have been a mixture of all three of these motives.

Woman is a sublime creature for me when she is what she should be. Just to see, to hear, and speak to her enriches my mind with noble thoughts. But when she is degraded and worthy of contempt she arouses in me feelings of agitation and distress, empties my heart of poetry.

Yet (an indispensable word, this, if we wish to describe such a composite being as a human one) among the voices of those women there were some that were sweet, and these (why not

admit it?) were dear to me. One of them, sweeter than the rest, I used to hear more rarely. It never uttered anything vulgar. It sang, but only a little, and for the most part, two lines full of pathos:

Who will give back to a wretch
Her happiness?

Sometimes it sang the Litany of the Saints. Her companions would sing with her then, but I had the knack of picking out Maddalena's voice from among the others which seemed to be trying to snatch it from me.

Yes, the poor woman was called Maddalena. Whenever her companions spoke of their own sufferings she would sympathise with a sigh and repeat: 'Courage, dear. God abandons no one!'

So I was bound, was I not, to imagine her beautiful, and unfortunate rather than guilty, born for virtue, capable of returning to it if she had strayed? Who could blame me for being moved by the sound of her voice, for listening with veneration, for praying for her with special fervour?

Innocence is to be venerated, but so is repentance! Did not the best of men, the man-God, deign to look pityingly on sinful women, to respect their confusion, to number them among the souls He honoured most? Why then should we so despise a woman who has fallen into disgrace?

As I reasoned with myself thus I was often tempted to raise my voice and declare my brotherly love for Maddalena. Once I even began to utter the first syllable of her name 'Mad. . . .' To my astonishment my heart was beating like a fifteen-year old in love; but I was thirty-one, which is not exactly an age for childish palpitations! I could not go on, and began again: 'Mad. . . . Mad. . . .' All in vain. I was making a fool of myself, and from sheer rage cried out: 'Not Mad, but mad!'

12

UNSAVOURY NEIGHBOURS

THUS ended my romance with that poor creature. But I was indebted to her for several weeks of tender feelings. I was often gloomy and her voice cheered me; and as I thought of the vileness and ingratitude of men and began to feel a general loathing for them all, Maddalena's voice helped to bring me back to compassion and tolerance.

I hope, unknown sinner, that you have not a heavy sentence. And that whatever it is, you may profit from it to raise yourself up and live and die near to Our Lord. May you have the sympathy and respect of all who know you as you had them from me who did not know you. May you inspire all who see you with patience, meekness, desire of virtue, and faith in God as you inspired them in one who loved you without seeing you. My imagination may err in depicting you as beautiful, but your soul was, I am sure. Your companions spoke grossly. You, modestly and gently. They blasphemed. You blessed God. They gossiped. You settled their quarrels. If any man stretches out a hand to draw you away from a life of dishonour, if he has done good to you delicately, if he has dried your tears, may every consolation rain upon him, upon his children, and upon the children of his children.

Adjoining my cell was another occupied by several men; I could hear them whenever they spoke. One of them stood out above the others, not I think by social status, but by greater fluency and boldness of speech. This man played the part of Know-All. He would start quarrels and then silence the contending parties by an imperious tone and a torrent of words. He dictated what they were to think and feel, and they, after some show of resistance, would eventually give way to him entirely.

Poor men! Not one of them tried to soften the horrors of prison by expressing any gentle thought, any hint of religion or love.

One day the leader of these neighbours greeted me and I returned the greeting. Then he asked me how I was getting through *this accursed life*. I told him that for me no life, however wretched, was accursed, and that we must go on trying right to the very end to enjoy the happiness of thinking and of loving.

'Explain your meaning, sir, explain your meaning!'

I explained, but was not understood. When after many ingenious preambles I plucked up courage to put forward as an example the tenderness aroused in me by Maddalena's voice, the gang leader burst into a roar of laughter.

'What is it? What is it?' exclaimed his companions. The profane wretch caricatured my words, and the laughter became general. I was made to look an utter fool.

Prison is like the world, in that those who think it wisdom to rage, to complain, to scorn others, hold it folly to have sympathy, to love, to find consolation in thoughts that honour humanity and its Author.

13

A WARDER'S REBUKE

I LET them laugh, without uttering a word of protest. They addressed me two or three times again; but I remained silent.

'Maybe he's no longer at the window.'

'Yes, maybe he's left it.'

'And is listening to the sighs of Maddalena!'

'Our laughter has probably offended him.'

They went on in this strain for a while. Eventually their leader imposed silence on those still muttering away about me.

'Quiet, you louts! You don't know what the hell you're saying! Our neighbour here is not such a fool as you think. You're incapable of reflection, any of you! I may sneer, but then I do reflect! Any lout can yell around like us! Now I ask you: a bit of gentle gaiety, a bit of charity, a bit of faith in Heaven's blessings, what d'you really think they're signs of?'

'Well, when I think it over,' one of them answered, 'maybe of being a bit less of a lout!'

'Well said!' roared the leader in stentorian tones. 'Now I begin to have some respect again for that pumpkin pate of yours!'

Though not over-flattered at being considered only *a bit less of a lout* than my neighbours, yet I felt a kind of joy that those men should have had second thoughts on the importance of cultivating benevolent sentiments.

I drew aside the shutter as if just returning to the window. The leader of the gang called. I answered, hoping he might want to moralize after my own fashion. But I had deceived myself. Vulgar minds flee all serious reasoning; if some noble truth shines on them they are capable of applauding it an instant, but soon tear their eyes away and yield to a mania for scoring by throwing that truth into doubt and laughing at it.

He asked me if I was in prison for debt.

'No.'

'Maybe you're accused of swindling, *falsely* of course!'

'I'm accused of something quite different.'

'To do with love?'

'No.'

'The *Carbonari*?'

'Precisely.'

'And who are these *Carbonari*?'

'I know so little about them that I couldn't tell you.'

A warder now interrupted us furiously and after abusing my neighbour turned to me with the serious air not of a *sbirro* but of a teacher, and said: 'Shame on you, sir! Deigning to speak with every kind of person! Don't you know these are thieves?'

I blushed, then I blushed for having blushed, for to deign to speak with every kind of person who is down seems a virtue, not a fault.

14

A VISITOR

NEXT morning I went to the window to see Melchior Gioia, but did not speak to the thieves next door. I returned their greetings and told them I was forbidden to talk. The notary who had interrogated me came to see me and told me with an air of mystery of a visit that would bring me pleasure. When he thought he had prepared me enough he said:

'In brief, it's your father. Please follow me.'

Trembling with joy and tenderness I followed him to the office downstairs, forcing myself to look calm in order to reassure my poor father.

On hearing of my arrest he had hoped that it was on unfounded suspicions and I should soon be free. But seeing my detention lasting he had come to plead with the Austrian Government for my release. Illusions of a father's love! He could not believe that I had been so rash as to expose myself to the severity of the law, while the studied cheerfulness with which I spoke to him convinced him that I had nothing to fear.

The short talk that we were allowed upset me beyond words, all the more because I was suppressing all signs of agitation. The hardest part was not to betray myself when the time came for us to separate.

I was firmly convinced that in the circumstances in which Italy was at that time the Austrian Government would make examples of extraordinary severity, and that I should be condemned to death or to many years in prison.

To hide this conviction from my father, to deceive him with a show of well-founded hope of an early release, to avoid bursting into tears as I embraced him and spoke to him of mother, brothers, sisters whom I felt I should never see again on this earth, to beg in a voice free from sorrow that he should come again to see me if he could; nothing has ever cost me more!

He left me, greatly relieved, while I returned to my cell with an anguished heart. I was hoping to find relief in tears as soon as I was alone. This was denied me. I did burst into sobs but could not shed a single tear. What a cruel misfortune it is to be unable to weep in an hour of supreme sorrow and, oh, how I had experienced it!

I was seized by a burning fever and a violent headache. All that day I did not swallow even a spoonful of soup. 'If only this were a fatal illness,' I kept on saying to myself, 'to shorten my sufferings!'

Foolish and cowardly prayer! God did not grant it, and now I thank Him. And I thank Him not only because after ten years in prison I have seen my beloved family again and may call myself happy, but also because suffering adds to a man's stature, and I like to think that in my case it has not been worthless.

15

THE BLESSING OF PRAYER

Two days later my father came again. I had been sleeping well at night and the fever had left me. Thus I was able to put on a relaxed and cheerful air, so that there was no suspicion of what I had suffered and was still suffering in my heart.

'I am hopeful,' my father said, 'that within a few days you'll be sent to Turin. We have already prepared your room and are awaiting you with great anxiety. I have to leave again on business, but try, I beg of you to try and join me soon.'

His tender and melancholy affection rent my heart. My pretence seemed imposed on me by filial piety, yet I went on pretending with a kind of remorse. Would it not have been worthier of my father and myself if I had said to him: 'Very likely we may never see each other again in this world. Let us

separate then like men, without complaining, without tears, and let me hear you pronounce the blessing of a father over my head!'

Such words would have pleased me far more than any pretence. But I looked into the venerable old man's eyes, at his features and his grey hairs, and it seemed to me that he might not have the strength to hear such things. Suppose if in my desire not to deceive him I should see him despair, perhaps faint, or even (terrible thought!) drop dead in my arms?

I could not tell him the truth nor allow him to suspect it. He was quite deceived by my apparent serenity, and we parted without tears. But when I got back to my cell I suffered as on the previous occasion, and even more cruelly; and again I prayed in vain for the gift of tears. I had it in me to resign myself to all the horrors of a long imprisonment, to resign myself even to the gallows; but to resign myself to the immense sorrow arising from either for my father, mother, brothers, and sisters, *that* I had not enough strength for.

Then I flung myself down with a stronger fervour than I ever had before and uttered this prayer:

'My God, I accept everything from your hands. But strengthen the hearts to whom I was necessary so that I may cease to be so to them, and may this not shorten the life of any of them by so much as one day.'

The blessing of prayer! I remained for several hours with my mind raised to God, and my trust in Him increased in proportion as I meditated on His divine goodness, in proportion also as I meditated on the greatness of the human soul when it frees itself from egoism and seeks to have no other will but the will of the infinite Wisdom. Nor is this impossible; for it is the duty of man, as reason itself tells us (and reason is the voice of God), to sacrifice all for the sake of virtue. And how can this sacrifice which we owe to virtue be carried out if in times of greatest sorrow we resist the will of Him who is the beginning of every virtue?

When the gallows or any other death cannot be evaded, to have a cowardly fear of it, not to know how to go forward

to meet it praising God, is a sign of either degeneration or ignorance. We must not only accept our own deaths but the sorrow of our loved ones. All that we should do is pray that God may soften that sorrow, that God may support us all. Such a prayer is always heard.

16

MY FRIEND PIERO

SEVERAL days went by and I was still in the same frame of mind, immersed, that is, in a sweet sadness full of peace and thoughts of religion. I seemed to have overcome every weakness and to be no longer open to disquiet. Foolish illusion! Man must aspire to perfect constancy of mind, but he never attains it in this world.

What upset me? The sight of an unhappy friend, of my good Piero as he passed a few feet from me along the gallery, while I was at my window. They were dragging him away from his den to the section reserved for criminals. Both he and those with him passed so swiftly that I scarcely had time to recognize him, notice his sign of greeting and return it.

Poor young man! In the flower of life, with a mind full of promise, and an upright, sensitive, and warm nature, flung into prison for his political views at a time when he would certainly not escape the severest penalties of the law! I was overcome by such passionate sympathy for him, such sorrow at being unable to save him, even to console him with my presence and words, that my peace of mind was lost. I knew how much he loved his mother, his brother, sisters, and brother-in-law, his little nephews, how eagerly he wanted to help them to be happy, how dearly he in his turn was loved by them all. I could feel the anguish of each one of them at such a disaster. No words can express the frenzy of restlessness that seized me then. It became so prolonged that I despaired of ever controlling it.

But this fear too was an illusion. You who are afflicted, who believe yourselves victims of some inescapable, mounting sorrow, have patience for a little and you will be disillusioned! Neither supreme peace nor supreme agitation can last here below. A man must needs convince himself of this truth if he is not to be raised above himself in hours of happiness nor crushed in the hour of trouble.

This long period of restlessness was followed by weariness and apathy. But since apathy cannot last long either I feared that from now on I should be thrown alternately and without repose between one and the other extremes. I shuddered at the prospect of such a future and again turned with fervour to prayer. I asked God to help poor Piero as myself, and his family as my own. Only by dint of repeating this prayer was I able to regain my peace of mind.

17

USEFUL REFLECTIONS

But when peace had returned to my soul I started to reflect on the restlessness I had suffered, and annoyed at my own weakness I began to study how to cure myself of it. To this end I made use of the following expedient. My first occupation every morning, after a short prayer of adoration of the Creator, was to make a bold and diligent review of every possible event capable of upsetting me. I let my imagination dwell on each, and prepared myself for it. From visits most longed-for to the visit of the executioner himself, I imagined them all. This grim exercise was unbearable for some days, but I was determined to keep it up, and in a short time I found what I was seeking.

On the first day of the year (1821) Count Luigi Porro[1]

[1] The Austrian authorities were still in the dark as to Porro's part in the events leading up to the arrest of Pellico and his friends. The Count, however, was warned some months later by a friend to leave the country. He

obtained permission to visit me. The close friendship between us, all we wanted to say to each other, the obstacles placed to such an outpouring by the presence of a notary, the all too short time granted us to be together, the sinister presentiments tormenting me, the effort we had to make, he and I, to appear calm; all this, it seemed to me, should have stirred up the most terrifying storm in my heart. On separating from that dear friend I felt at peace. Moved, yes, but at peace.

Such is the efficacy of forearming oneself against strong emotions.

My urge to acquire constant peace arose not so much from a wish to lessen my unhappiness as from the fact that anger appeared to me to be ugly and unworthy of a man. A mind in agitation can no longer reason. Caught up in a whirlwind of exaggerated ideas it constructs its own logic, a foolish, raging, evil logic, a state of mind that is utterly anti-philosophical, anti-christian. If I were a preacher I would often insist on the need to banish disquiet, for on no other condition can a man be good. How calm He was in Himself and with others, He Whom we must all imitate! There can be no greatness of soul, there can be no justice without a sense of moderation, without a spirit that is more ready to smile than be riled by the vicissitudes of this short life. Anger has no value except in the very rare case when one may presume to humble some wicked person by means of it, and to draw him from evil ways.

There may of course be frenzies different from those that I know, and less to be condemned. But that frenzy whose slave I had been till then was not just an affliction. Mixed with it always was much hatred, an urge to curse, to paint society or this or that person to myself in the most hateful colours. It is an epidemic among men. Detesting their fellow men makes them feel better themselves. It is as if all who are friends

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did so in time to avoid being arrested, and took refuge first in Switzerland, then in France, and finally in London. The Austrian Government condemned him to death *in absentia*, but in 1840 he was pardoned and allowed to return home from Greece where he had held important positions in the Greek Government.

whisper into each other's ears: 'Let us love only one another! If we call everyone else louts we'll seem like demi-gods!'

How strange it should be so attractive to live in a state of rage. It is invested with a kind of bravery. If the object of yesterday's aversion is dead they look around for another at once. 'Whom shall I complain of today? Whom shall I hate? Could *that* be the monster . . . ? Oh what joy! I've found him! Come, friends, let's tear him to pieces!'

That is how the world goes, and without doing it an injustice I can say it goes badly.

18

ANOTHER CHANGE OF CELL

It was no spleen that made me complain about the horrors of the cell in which they had put me. Fortunately a better one was left vacant and it was a pleasant surprise for me when I was given it.

Should I not have been delighted at such a change? Yet, actually, I was unable to think of Maddalena without a pang of regret. What childishness! Always to be losing my heart, even with motives that can only be called flimsy!

As I was about to leave that ghastly cell I cast a glance back to the wall against which I had so often leaned, while on the other side, perhaps a few inches away, had also leaned that unhappy sinner. I should have liked to hear once again those two pathetic verses:

Who will give back to a wretch
Her happiness?

But it was not to be. I had come to yet another separation in my unhappy life. I do not want to go on about it lest I be laughed at; but it would be hypocritical not to confess that it made me sad for several days.

On my way I greeted a couple of those thieves, my

neighbours, who were at the window of their cell. Their leader was not with them, but on his companions telling him, he hurried to the window and returned my greeting. Then he began to hum the tune of:

Who will give back to a wretch . . .

Did he mean to mock me? I am sure that if I was to put this question to fifty people forty-nine of them would say Yes! But, despite this, I am inclined to believe that this good thief meant to do me a kindness. I took it as such, was grateful, and gave him another look; then, thrusting his arm through the bars and holding his cap in his hand, he waved at me again and again until I turned down the stairs.

On coming out into the courtyard I had a pleasant surprise. Under the portico was the little deaf-mute. He saw me, recognized me, and tried to run to meet me. But the warder's wife, for some unknown reason, grabbed him by the collar and thrust him indoors. Sorry as I was not to be able to take him into my arms, yet the little hops he made in his effort at running towards me touched me deeply. How sweet it is to be loved!

That was a day of great events. A few paces farther on I passed by the window of my former cell, where Gioia now was.

'Good day to you, Melchior!' I said as I passed. He raised his head, leapt towards me, and cried out:

'Good day to you, Silvio!'

Alas, I was not allowed to stop even for a second. Turning through the gate I climbed a short staircase and was put into a small and clean cell above the one occupied by Gioia. I had my bed brought over and was left alone by the under-warders.

My first step was to examine the walls of the cell. A number of inscriptions had been written on them, some in pencil, some in charcoal, others with a sharp instrument. Two verses in French struck me as graceful and I am sorry now that I did not memorize them. They had been signed: *Le Duc de Normandie.*

I had started to sing them by adapting as well as I could the tune of my poor Maddalena's song, when suddenly a voice

that sounded very near sang them back to another tune. When the singer stopped I cried out to him: 'Well done!'

He greeted me politely and asked me if I was French.

'No, I am an Italian, and my name is Silvio Pellico.'

'The author of *Francesca da Rimini*?'[1]

'Yes.'

He paid me a polite compliment, and expressed proper condolence at learning that I was a prisoner. He then asked me from what part of Italy I came.

'Piedmont,' I replied. 'I'm from Saluzzo.'

Another polite compliment on the character and qualities of the Piedmontese, and a special word for the good people of Saluzzo, and in particular for Bodoni.[2]

Those few words of praise were well put, such as a well educated person might utter.

'Now,' I said to him, 'please allow me to ask you, sir, who you are?'

'You have been singing a little song of mine.'

'Are they yours, these two charming verses on the wall here?'

'Yes.'

'You are then . . . ?'

'The unhappy Duke of Normandy.'

19

A STRANGE STORY

THE warder who was passing by under our windows silenced us.

'What unhappy Duke of Normandy is this?' I asked myself in wonder. 'Isn't that the title that used to be given to the son

[1] This was the most popular of Pellico's tragedies (see p. xiv and p. 189). Pellico's other tragedies, *Laodamia*, *Eufemio di Messina*, *Ester d'Engaddi*, *Iginia d'Asti* (for these last two see p. 52 and p. 108), and also *Gismonda da Mendrisio*, *Erodiade*, *Ezzelino*, *Tommaso Moro*, etc., while containing much that is good, are poor stuff as plays.

[2] Giovanni Battista Bodoni (1740–1813) was the famous printer whose editions of the classics from his press in Parma are themselves works of art.

of Louis XVI? But that poor little child is undoubtedly dead. Well then, my neighbour here must be one of those wretches who have tried to bring him back to life!'

A number of persons in fact had already given themselves out to be Louis XVII, and been unmasked as impostors. What greater credence then could this one command? I tried to keep my mind in a state of doubt, but incredulity stubbornly prevailed, then and later. None the less I was determined not to mortify the unhappy man, no matter what nonsense he might tell me.

A few minutes later he started to sing again, and then we continued our conversation. To my question concerning himself he replied that he was in fact Louis XVII, and at this began to inveigh violently against his uncle, Louis XVIII, usurper of his rights.

'But these rights of yours,' I asked him, 'why did you not claim them at the Restoration?'[1]

'At that time I was lying very seriously ill at Bologna. As soon as I was up I hurried post-haste to Paris and presented myself to the Powers. But what had been done had been done. My wicked uncle refused to recognize me. My sister joined him to oppress me. Only the good Prince de Condè received me with open arms, but his friendship could do nothing for me. One night I was attacked in the streets of Paris by hired assassins armed with poniards, and only just escaped their blows. Then, after wandering for some time in Normandy I returned to Italy and stopped at Modena. From there I wrote incessantly to the kings of Europe and particularly to the Emperor Alexander, who answered my letters most politely. I did not give up hope that justice would be finally done to me, or that if for political reasons they wished me to give up my right to the throne of France they would at least assign me a decent appanage. But I was arrested, taken to the fron-

[1] Strictly speaking, of course, the Restoration, the period that is between the return of the Bourbons to the throne of France and their fall, embraces the years 1814–30 (see footnote 1, p. 184). Here, however, the *first* Restoration is meant, that is from April 1814 to March 1815.

tiers of the dukedom of Modena and handed over to the Austrian Government. Eight months I've been buried here now, and God knows when I shall get out!'[1]

I did not believe all he said: but that he was buried there in prison was true, and this aroused sympathy.

On my asking him to give me a short account of his life, he told me with minute exactness all the details that I already knew about Louis XVII; how he was handed over to the rascally Simon the Cobbler;[2] how he was forced to bear witness to prove an infamous calumny against the morals of his poor mother the Queen, and so forth. And finally how, when he was in prison, some person came by night to take him away; an imbecile child called Mathurin was substituted for him and he was smuggled out of the prison. In the street outside a carriage had been waiting drawn by four horses; one of the horses was made of wood and hollow, and in this he was hidden. They reached the Rhine safely and when they had crossed the frontier the General (he told me the name but I have forgotten it) who had freed him acted as both tutor and father for a time; eventually he sent or took him to America. There the young king without a kingdom had many ups and downs, suffered hunger in deserts, became a soldier, lived honoured and happy at the court of the King of Brazil, was calumniated, persecuted, forced to flee. He returned to Europe towards the end of the Napoleonic era, was kept in prison in Naples by Joachim Murat, and just when free again and about to reclaim the throne of France he was struck down in Bologna by that disastrous illness, during which Louis XVIII was crowned.

[1] He was kept in prison for seven and a half years.

[2] The young Dauphin was handed over to Simon, a cobbler, to be educated by him. Simon treated his pupil in the most inhuman manner.

20

AN IMPOSTOR?

All this he told me with an amazing air of truthfulness, and while I was unable to believe I had to admire. He had all the facts of the French Revolution at his finger-tips, spoke of them with a great show of spontaneous eloquence, and related the oddest anecdotes at every turn. Moreover without lacking any of the elegance that comes to a man from mixing in polite society there was something of the soldier in his manner of speaking.

'You will permit me,' I said, 'to treat you without ceremony, without giving you any titles.'

'That is what I wish,' he answered. 'At least I've gained from my misfortunes a capacity to smile at all vanity. I assure you that I consider it more important to be a man than to be a king.'

We used to speak to one another at length every morning and evening, and despite what I considered his act I found his heart good, pure, and desirous of every moral good. Several times I was on the point of saying: 'You will forgive me, I know. I should like to believe that you are Louis XVII, but sincerity compels me to admit that I am quite convinced you are not! Do please be frank enough to give up this fiction!' I used to go over in my mind a nice little sermon to preach to him on the vanity of every lie; of those lies, even, that seem to be harmless. From day to day I put it off in the hope that our intimacy might grow a degree or two more, and never had the courage to carry out my design. Sometimes when I reflect on my lack of courage I make excuses for it as a necessary urbanity, an honest fear of hurting, and what not. These excuses, however, do not really convince me, since I must admit that I would be more content with myself if I had not kept that little imaginary sermon of mine lodged safely in my throat. It is faint-heartedness that makes a man pretend he

believes in an imposture; I feel I will not be guilty of it again.

Yes, faint-heartedness! For it is certain that no matter how much we may strive to soften the blow by means of delicate preambles it is hard to say to a man, 'I don't believe you!' He may lose his temper and cover us with abuse, and we shall lose the pleasure of his friendship. But any loss is more honourable than a lie. What is more, the wretch who abuses us for refusing to believe in his imposture might later secretly admire our sincerity; and this could lead to reflections that might draw him back to a better life.

The under-warders, however, were inclined to believe that my neighbour really was Louis XVII, and having witnessed so many changes of fortune they did not give up hope that one day this man might ascend the throne of France and would then remember their devoted services. Short of helping him to escape they used every regard towards him that he desired.

Because of this I had the honour of seeing the great man in person. He was of middle height, between forty and forty-five years of age, rather stout, and with truly Bourbon features. Possibly an accidental resemblance to the Bourbons had led him to play that sad part.

21

RELIGIOUS DISCUSSIONS WITH THE DUKE

I MUST accuse myself of another unworthy weakness of human respect. My neighbour was not an atheist. On the contrary, he sometimes spoke of religious sentiments as one who appreciated them and was himself no stranger to them; but he had many unreasonable prejudices against Christianity, in which he considered far less its essence than its abuses. The superficial philosophy that preceded and followed the Revolution in

France had dazzled him so much that he was convinced that a purer worship of God was possible outside the religion of the Gospels. Without any great knowledge of Condillac and Tracy[1] he venerated them as supreme thinkers, and imagined that the latter had brought to an end every possible metaphysical speculation.

I, who had carried my philosophical studies much farther, who felt the weakness of the experimental approach, who knew the gross errors of criticism with which Voltaire's century had tried to slander Christianity: I who had read Guénée[2] and other able refuters of this false criticism: I who was convinced that a man cannot logically admit the existence of God and refuse to accept the Gospels: I who found it a vulgar thing for a man to drift with the current of anti-Christian opinions, and be unable to lift himself up to see how simple and sublime is Catholicism when it is not caricatured, I was base enough to sacrifice at the altar of human respect!

My neighbour's facetious remarks would throw me into confusion, though I realized their levity. I hid my faith, hesitated, reflected whether it was the right time to contradict or not, told myself that it was useless, and tried to persuade myself that my attitude was justified. What baseness! After all, if an opinion has no foundation what use is its defence with cocksure vigour by men of intelligence? True, an untimely zeal is not desirable, and may only serve to irritate more one who does not believe. But to confess frankly and modestly what one firmly holds as an important truth, to confess it even when presumably it will neither be approved nor escape a certain amount of mockery, this is a clear-cut duty. A man moreover can always make such a noble confession without donning the inopportune mantle of the preacher. It is always

[1] Etienne Bonnot de Condillac (1715–80) was the father of the theory known as *Sensationalism* according to which all our ideas are derived solely from our sensations, a theory to which his admirer and follower, Louis Destutt de Tracy, tried to give philosophical form and consistency, a Sisyphean undertaking.

[2] In his *Lettres de quelques Juifs* (1769) the Abbé Antoine Guénée (1717–1803) defended the Bible with vigour and efficacy against Voltaire.

a duty to confess an important truth, because even if there is no hope that it will be at once accepted, it can so prepare another's mind as to produce in him one day more impartiality of judgement, and the consequent triumph of light.

22

A PRISONER IN VENICE

I HAD been in that cell for a month and some days when during the night of 18–19 February 1821 I was awakened by a noise of padlocks and keys. By the light of a lantern they were carrying I saw several men coming into my cell. My first thought was that they had come to cut my throat, but as I was gazing in some concern at these figures I found Count B.[1] coming towards me and politely telling me to be so good as to dress quickly in order to leave the prison.

Astonished by this information I was foolish enough to hope that they were going to take me to the Piedmontese frontier.

'Is it possible,' I said to myself, 'that such a great storm can blow itself out like this? Am I really going to be set free? And once more see my beloved parents, my brothers, my sisters?'

For a few seconds these hopeful thoughts flashed through my flustered mind; I dressed myself with great speed and followed my guards without being able to greet my neighbour for the last time. I thought I heard his voice and was sorry to be unable to answer.

'Where are we going?' I said to the Count as I got into a carriage with him and a police officer.

'I may not tell you until we are a mile outside Milan.'

On noticing that the carriage was not going in the direction of Porta Vercellina,[2] my hopes vanished. I was silent. It was a most beautiful night, and as we passed through the city under

[1] This was Count Bolza of Menaggio, the police notary and a determined opponent of the Italian Liberals.

[2] Now Porta Magenta.

the light of the moon I looked out at those beloved streets through which I had walked so happily for so many years, looked at those houses, those churches. Everything brought back a thousand happy memories. The narrow entrance of Porta Orientale,[1] the public gardens where I had so many times wandered with Foscolo,[2] with Monti,[3] with Lodovico di Breme,[4] with Pietro Borsieri,[5] with Porro and his children, with so many other beloved friends, in all the fullness of life and hope. How deeply I felt that I had loved them all, those streets and buildings, and still loved them as they told me that I was looking on them for the last time, and then fled swiftly from my sight.

When we had passed through the gate I drew my hat a little farther down over my eyes and wept unseen.

After a mile I said to Count B.: 'I suppose we are going to Verona?'

'Farther than that,' he replied. 'We are going to Venice, where I am to hand you over to a special Commission.'

Travelling post, and without any stop at all, we reached Venice on 20 February.

A month before they had arrested me, in September of

[1] This is the present Porta Venezia.

[2] Ugo Foscolo (1778–1827). His *Letters of Jacopo Ortis* (see footnote 2, p. 85) reflects the anguish and ultimate suicide of a disillusioned Italian patriot; while his *I Sepolcri* summons the heroes of the past from their tombs to fight for the liberation of their country from the yoke of the invader. After the Treaty of Vienna, by which Venetian Lombardy was handed over to the Austrians, Foscolo fled first to Switzerland, and then, in 1816, to London, where he died in 1827.

[3] Vincenzo Monti (1754–1828) was a poet of no mean standing, but a writer of indifferent tragedies. Pellico seems to have had little time for him, and accuses him of being a coward. Monti had, in fact, promised to collaborate in the *Conciliatore* (p. xiv), but when he realized the dangers to which he might be exposing himself he prudently withdrew his promise.

[4] Lodovico di Breme of Turin (1781–1820) was an enthusiastic supporter of Romanticism in Italy (see footnote, p. 3).

[5] Pietro Borsieri (1788–1852) was a lawyer by profession, and one of the collaborators of the *Conciliatore*. Arrested in 1822 and condemned to prison for twenty years, he was released in 1836 (see p. 157 text and footnote).

the previous year, I had been in Venice and had dined with a large and very happy company in the Albergo della Luna. Strange coincidence! It was to this very hotel that I was taken by the Count and the police officer. At sight of me one of the waiters gazed wide-eyed as he realized (despite the fact that the officer and his two assistants, who pretended to be servants, were in plain clothes) that I was in the hands of the police. I was glad of this meeting, for I was convinced that he would speak about my arrival to more than one of my friends.

We dined, then I was taken to the Doge's palace where the tribunals are now held. I passed under the beloved porticos of the *Procuratie*[1] and in front of Florian's[2] where I had enjoyed lovely evenings the previous autumn. But I did not meet any acquaintances.

We crossed the piazetta. It was in this very square that, the previous September, a beggar had spoken these singular words to me:

'You're obviously a stranger, sir. I just can't understand how you, like all other strangers, admire this place. For me it's unlucky and I only pass through it when I have to.'

'Has some calamity befallen you here?'

'Yes, sir. A dreadful calamity, and not only me. May God protect you, sir, may God protect you!'

And with that he had hurried away.

As I passed by there again I found myself remembering the beggar's words. In that square a year later I was to mount a platform to hear my own sentence of death read out to me, and then commutation to fifteen years hard labour. If I were one of those whose heads are a-spin with pseudo-mysticism I should make a great deal of that beggar so firmly telling me that it

[1] Strictly speaking, the Procuratie are the Porticos of Piazza San Marco. I think, however, that Pellico uses the word here in the sense of the Procuratia (singular), the name given to the building in Piazza San Marco which used to be the home of the Procurators or Magistrates of San Marco.

[2] *Caffè Florian.* It was opened in 1720, and, like the Hotel Luna, is still going strong.

was an unlucky place. But I simply mention the fact as an odd incident.

We went up into the palace, where Count B., after speaking with the judges, handed me over to the prison warder. Then as he took leave of me he embraced me with great emotion.

23

NEW FACES

I FOLLOWED the warder in silence, and after we had passed through several corridors and rooms we came to a narrow staircase that led us under the *Piombi*,[1] state prisons famous from the time of the Venetian Republic. Here the warder entered my name in a register and then locked me up in the cell assigned to me.

The prison known as the *Piombi* is the upper part of the old palace of the Doge, and it is so called because it is covered with lead. My cell had a large window with thick bars to it and looked out on to the roof, also of lead, of the church of San Marco. On the other side of the church I could see in the distance the end of the piazza, while on every side there was a forest of cupolas and campanili. The gigantic campanile of San Marco was separated from me only by the length of the church itself, so that I could hear people at the top of it whenever they spoke fairly loudly. I could also see to the left of the church a section of the great courtyard of the palace and one of the entrances. In that part of the courtyard there is a public

[1] 'The Leads.' Chateaubriand tried to prove (in his *Mémoires d'outre-tombe*) that Pellico was never in a cell *under* the *Piombi*, because (*a*) there were only five such cells and they were at the end of the building farthest from where Pellico was imprisoned; and (*b*) the *Piombi* were no longer used as prison-cells. Pellico, however, proved quite conclusively in a letter to Countess Octavia Masino di Mombello (23 August 1836) that he had in fact been kept in a cell *under* the *Piombi* as he states in the text; and it has been proved from other sources that the *Piombi* cells were actually re-opened as prison-cells in 1591.

well to which a continual stream of people come to draw water. But my cell was so high up that to me the men down there looked like children, and I could not make out what they were saying unless when they shouted. Thus I was far more isolated than I had been in the prison of Milan.

During the first days, preoccupations about the criminal trial mounted against me by the special Commission, and maybe also this feeling of greater isolation, made me a little gloomy. I was, moreover, farther than ever from my family and no longer with any news of them. The new faces I saw around me I did not find disagreeable, but they kept an almost terrifying seriousness of expression. Rumour had exaggerated the plottings of the Milanese and of the rest of Italy for independence, and they were not sure if I was not one of the most guilty instigators of that delirium.

The slender reputation I had won as a writer was known to the warder and his family (the wife, a daughter, and two sons), as well as to the two under-warders, all of whom seemed to imagine a writer of tragedies to be some kind of magician. They were serious folk, diffident, eager to prise more information about myself from me, but full of politeness. After the first few days they all softened towards me, and I found them good. The wife was the one who most kept up the bearing and character of a warder. She was a woman of some forty years of age, with a face as dry as a stick and words every bit as dry; a woman, moreover, who gave not the slightest sign that she was capable of any kindness to anyone but her own children.

She used to bring me my coffee in the morning, and after dinner water, linen, and so on. On her heels would usually come her daughter, a girl of fifteen, who though not pretty had eyes full of compassion, and her two boys, the one thirteen, the other ten. Afterwards they would go away with their mother, but as the door closed behind them the three young faces would turn round and look at me affectionately. The warder himself came only when he had to take me to the room where the Commission examined me. The under-warders came but rarely, since they had to attend to the cells of the common

prison which was on a lower floor and always full of thieves. One of these under-warders was an old man of over seventy but still able to stand that exhausting life of running incessantly up and down stairs between the various prisons. The other was a young man of twenty-four or twenty-five, more interested in talking about his love affairs than in his work.

24

IN HELL

Terrible indeed are the worries of anyone on trial for plotting against the state! How deep his fear of harming others! How great the difficulty of fighting against so many accusations and suspicions! How real the probability that everything will become more and more fatally entangled if the trial does not end soon, if more arrests are made, if new acts of imprudence are discovered, even though done by persons not known to him but of the same faction!

I have resolved not to speak of politics and so must suppress any account of the trial. All I will say is that often after being interrogated for long hours I returned to my cell so exacerbated, so agitated that I would have killed myself had the voice of my faith and the memory of my beloved parents not held me back. The habit of calm that I had succeeded in acquiring, as I thought, in Milan was shattered, so that for several days I despaired of ever recovering it. Days in Hell, those were. I gave up praying, doubted the justice of God, cursed the human race and the universe, and went over in my mind one by one every possible sophism on the futility of virtue.

A man who is both angry and unhappy is horribly ingenious at calumniating his fellow-men and his very Creator. Anger is more immoral, more wicked than we usually think it is. Since no man can rage from morning to night, week in and week out, and even a soul utterly dominated by furious anger must have its moments of rest, yet these very moments of rest

usually suffer from the evil that has gone before. At such time the soul appears to be at peace, but it is an evil, irreligious peace, a savage smile devoid of love or dignity, a disorder, a frenzy, and a mockery.

In a state of mind such as this I would sing for hours on end with a kind of joy quite sterile of good sentiments. I jested with anyone who happened to come into the cell, and forced myself to look at everything with a vulgar wisdom, the wisdom of a cynic.

This abominable phase lasted a short time only: six or seven days in fact. It came to an end in an unexpected way.

My Bible was covered with dust. One of the warder's boys said one day as he played with me: 'Since you stopped reading that big ugly book you haven't been so sad.'

'D'you think so?' I replied as I took up the Bible and removed the dust from it with a handkerchief. Then I opened it carelessly and my eyes fell on these words: *And He said to His disciples: It is impossible that scandals should not come: but woe to him through whom they come. It were better for him, that a mill-stone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should scandalise one of these little ones.*[1]

I was struck at coming across these words, and then blushed at the thought that the boy had noticed from the dust on it that I no longer read my Bible and that he should have presumed from this that I had become more agreeable by thinking less of God.

'You young rascal!' I said to him in tender rebuke, sorry for having scandalized him. 'This is not a big ugly book, and since I stopped reading it some days ago I am much worse. When your mother allows you to stay with me for a minute I make an effort to drive away my bad humour; but if only you knew how it overwhelms me when I am alone, when you hear me singing away like a madman!'

[1] The quotation is from St. Luke xvii. 1, et seq.

25

REPENTANCE AND CONSOLATION

THE boy had left, and I was feeling a certain pleasure in having taken up the Bible again and confessed that I was worse off without it. I felt as if I had given satisfaction to a generous friend unjustly offended, and been reconciled to him.

'Did I abandon You then, my God?' I cried. 'Was I so perverted? Did I really believe that the mocking laugh of a cynic suited my desperate state?'

These words I uttered with indescribable emotion; then placing the Bible on a chair I knelt down on the floor to read it. But I burst into tears, I who find it so hard to weep.

Those tears were a hundred times sweeter than any animal happiness. Again I felt God. I loved Him. I was sorry that I had outraged Him by degrading myself. I swore that I would never again separate myself from Him, never again.

How consoling and uplifting to a soul is its sincere return to religion.

For more than an hour I read and wept, and when I rose to my feet I was full of confidence that God was with me, that He had forgiven all my folly. At that moment my misfortunes, the torture of my trial, even the gallows itself seemed a small thing. I felt a deep joy in my sufferings because they gave me a chance to fulfil a duty towards God, since by bearing them with resignation I was being obedient to Him.

I knew, God be praised for it, how to read my Bible. The time was now long past when I used to judge it according to the narrow criticism of Voltaire, that treats with contempt expressions which are neither ridiculous nor false except to one who either through real ignorance or malice fails to penetrate their true meaning. I saw clearly how it was the very embodiment of holiness, and therefore of truth; how superficial it was to be offended by its stylistic imperfections and how similar such an attitude was to the pride of one who despises all

that is not presented in elegant dress; how absurd it was to imagine that such a collection of books, surrounded by religious veneration, had no authentic foundation; how impossible it was, finally, to deny the superiority of such writings over the Koran or the theology of India.

Many have abused it; many have tried to turn it into a code of injustice, a sanction for their evil passions. All this is true, but then we are always at the same point: abuse can be made of anything. But why on earth should the abuse of something good make us say that the latter is in reality bad?

Jesus Christ himself has said that the whole Law and the Prophets, all this collection of Sacred Books, are contained in the precept to love God and men. Can such Scriptures then not be truthful and suitable for every age? Are they not the ever-living word of the Holy Ghost?

When such thoughts re-awakened in me, I renewed my resolution to try and link up with religion all my ideas concerning human affairs, all my opinions on the progress of civilization, my philanthropy, my patriotism, all the sentiments of my soul.

The cynicism in which I spent those days, few as they were, contaminated me. Its effects lasted a long time and I had to fight hard in order to overcome them. Every time a man gives way even a little to the temptation to lower his intelligence, to look at the works of God through the satanic lens of mockery, to turn away from the beneficent exercise of prayer, the damage that he works in his own mind disposes him to fall again more easily. Thus for several weeks I was attacked almost daily by powerful thoughts of unbelief; it took all the strength of my soul to drive them away.

26

THE BURDEN OF LONELINESS

At the end of this struggle I felt that I was once more firmly fixed in my habit of seeking the will of God in all things, and enjoyed for some time a deep peace. The interrogations to which the Commission subjected me every two or three days were no longer able to upset me for any length of time, no matter how tormenting they were. In my difficult position I strove not to fail in my duty of truthfulness and friendship; then I used to say: 'Let God do the rest!'

Once again I started to practise daily the foreseeing of every possible event, emotion, or misfortune; and once again this was of great help to me.

In the meantime my loneliness increased. The two sons of the warder, who at the beginning had sometimes kept me a little company, were sent to school, and since they were now at home very little they no longer came to my cell. Their mother and sister, who had often stopped to speak to me when the boys were there, now showed themselves only to bring me coffee and then left me alone. As far as the mother was concerned I had little regret since she gave no sign of any tender heart. But the daughter, a rather ugly girl, had a certain sweetness of expression and of words which I could not but appreciate. When *she* brought me my coffee and said: 'I have made it myself,' it always tasted excellent. But when she said: 'Mother made it,' it was luke-warm water.

Since, then, I saw so little of human beings I started to turn my attention to some ants that used to crawl on the window-sill. I fed them sumptuously, and they scurried off to call an army of their companions, so that the window-sill was full of them. I also started to pay attention to a fat spider that was weaving its tapestries on one of the walls. I would feed it with flies and mosquitoes, and it became so friendly that it was

soon crawling over the bed and over my hand to take its prey from my fingers.

Would that they had been the only insects to pay me visits! It was still spring-time, but already mosquitoes were multiplying at what I can only call a terrifying rate. The winter had been extraordinarily mild and after a few windy days in March the heat had begun.

The air in the den in which I lived became almost unbearably hot. It faced due south, under a roof of lead, its window looking out on to the leaden roof of San Marco from which the sun hammered back at me with stunning force, and I felt myself suffocating. Never before had I experienced such oppressive heat. This torture was made even greater by mosquitoes in such multitudes that no matter how much I fought them, how many I killed, I was always covered with them. And not only I, but bed, table, chair, floor, walls, ceiling, everything in the cell was a mass of mosquitoes, while the air was filled with an infinity of them coming and going unendingly through the open window to the sound of a diabolical whirr.

The sting of the mosquito is always painful, but when you are being stung by them from morning to night and from night to morning while at the same time having to grapple with the ever-present problem of how to cut down the number of stings, you really suffer in mind as well as in body.

As soon as I became aware of this scourge I realized the seriousness of it. Having failed, however, to get a change of cell I was tempted once or twice to commit suicide, and there were times when I thought I should go mad. These fits of frenzy did not last long, thank Heaven, and my religion continued to sustain me. Not only did it convince me that man must suffer and suffer bravely, but it also helped me to feel a certain pleasure in the pain, a satisfaction in not letting it defeat me, in overcoming it completely.

I kept on telling myself: the more unbearable they make life for me the less terrified I shall be if, young as I am, I find myself condemned to death. Without these preliminary sufferings

I might die like a coward. In any case, are my virtues such as to merit only happiness for me? Where are these virtues?

And examining myself with severity and balance I could find in all the years of my life only a few somewhat specious patches to be in any way praised; all the rest was foolish passions, idolatries, vain and false virtue.

'Very well then,' I would conclude, 'go on suffering since you deserve nothing better! If men and mosquitoes should kill you even in unjust fury, look on them as the instruments of divine justice, and be silent!'

27

HOURS OF REFLECTION

Do men need strength to humble themselves sincerely? To recognize themselves as sinners? Do they not, in general, throw away the best years of their lives in vanities, instead of bending all their strength to going forward in the way of virtue? Do they not spend most of these years degrading themselves?

There are, no doubt, exceptions, but I confess that these do not concern my own wretched person. Nor have I any merit in being so dissatisfied with myself. If you see a lantern giving out more smoke than light you do not need much sincerity to admit that it is not burning as it should. Thus it was that without abasement, without hypocritical scruples but looking at myself as calmly, as dispassionately as possible, I could see I deserved to be punished by God.

An inner voice said to me: 'These punishments are justly yours, if not for this sin, then for that one. May they bring you back to Him Who is perfect, and Whom all men are called upon to imitate according to their limited powers.'

What right, then, could I have to complain, obliged as I was to condemn myself for a thousand acts of infidelity to God, if some men appeared to me vile, and others wicked, if the good things of this world were snatched from my hands, if I

had to burn myself out in prison or perish by a violent death? I succeeded in impressing such just and sincerely felt reflections as these deep in my heart. When I had done this I saw that I had to be logical, but that I could only be so by blessing the just judgements of God, by loving them, and suppressing in myself every impulse of will opposed to them.

In order to acquire constancy in this resolution I decided to develop diligently all my sentiments from then on by writing them down. Unfortunately, however, the Commission, while allowing me to have an inkpot and writing-paper, had the pages numbered, and forbade me to destroy any of them, reserving the right to see what use I made of them. So in order to eke out my supply of writing-paper I had recourse to the simple expedient of scraping the top of a rough table that I had with a piece of glass, and writing on that each day long meditations on the duties of men and of myself in particular.

I am not exaggerating when I say that the hours spent in this way were sometimes very happy, despite the difficulty I had in breathing owing to the oppressive heat, and despite the excruciating pain from mosquito bites. I was forced, in order to cut down the number of these stings, and in spite of the heat, to keep my head and legs well covered, and to write not only with gloves on my hands but also with the sleeves of my jacket tied at the wrists to prevent the mosquitoes from crawling up my arms.

These meditations of mine were rather autobiographical. They were an account of all the good and evil that had grown in me from the days of my childhood. At the same time I debated with myself and strove to resolve all my doubts, while seeking to systematize as well as I could all my knowledge and all my ideas on everything and anything.

When the whole usable surface of the table had been covered with writing I would read it over and over again, and ponder over what I had already pondered over already; then, finally, I forced myself (often regretfully) to scrape everything away with the piece of glass so that the surface should be ready to receive new thoughts. I then went on with the story of

my life which, however, was forever being slowed down by digressions of every kind and by analyses now of this, now of that other point of metaphysics, ethics, politics, or religion. When all was full again I stopped to read and re-read, then to scrape again.

Since I did not wish to have any excuse that might prevent me from repeating to myself with the greatest possible frankness the facts that I was jotting down and my opinions on them, and foreseeing, too, the possibility of an inquisitorial visit, I used to write in a code of transported letters and abbreviations, at which I was expert.[1] However, no such visit to my cell ever took place, nor did anyone ever suspect that I managed to pass so well those very sad days. As soon as I heard the warder or anybody else opening the cell door I would cover the table with a cloth and place on this the inkpot and the official five sheets of paper.

28

LITERARY DISTRACTIONS

SOME hours of my time, and now and then an entire day or night, were, however, given to those five sheets. On them I wrote of literary matters. It was then that I wrote *Ester d'Engaddi*, *Iginia d'Asti*, and the poems entitled *Tancreda*, *Rosilde*, *Eligi e Valafrido*, *Adello*, besides the outlines of several tragedies and of other works, among which were a poem on the Lombard League, and another on Christopher Columbus.

As it was not always an easy matter to get a new supply of this paper as soon as those five sheets had been used up, I would make the first rough copy of every composition on the

[1] Pellico made use of this code to communicate with his fellow prisoners. The key to the code, found among Pellico's papers, was as follows: o—a, p—b, g—c, t—d, y—e, v—f, c—g, h—h, u—i, r—l, n—m, m—n, a—o, b—p, k—q, l—r, s—s, d—t, e—u, f—v, z—z, x—ss, w—gl, mw—gn, gd—tt.

table-top or on scraps of paper in which dried figs and other fruit were brought to me. There were times also when I gave my dinner to one of the under-warders with the excuse that I had no appetite for it, and thus coaxed him to make me a gift of a sheet or two of paper. This happened only in certain circumstances; when, that is, the table-top was already cluttered up with writing that I had not the heart to scrape off just yet. I would feel hungry then, and although the warder had some money of mine in deposit I would not ask him for food at any time during that day, partly lest he suspect I had given away my dinner, partly lest the under-warder saw that I had lied to him in assuring him that I had no appetite. In the evening I used to fortify myself with a strong brew of coffee which I begged might be made by the young girl, Zanze,[1] the warder's daughter. If she could do so unknown to her mother she would make the stuff extraordinarily strong, so that on an empty stomach it used to bring on a kind of painless convulsion that kept me awake all night.

In this state of mild intoxication I felt my mental powers redoubled, so that I was composing poetry, philosophizing and praying with wonderful ease right up till dawn. Then a sudden weakness would come over me; I would throw myself on the bed, and in spite of the mosquitoes sucking my blood even with the covers over me, fall into a deep sleep that lasted for an hour or two.

Nights like these, stimulated by strong coffee on an empty stomach and spent in such a wonderful exaltation of spirit, seemed so beneficent that I felt it my duty to procure them often. So that often even when I had no need to ask the under-warder for more paper I would decide to touch nothing at supper in order to obtain at night the enchantment I longed for from the magic beverage. How happy I was when successful in this! But more than once the coffee had not been made by kind Zanze, and then it was a useless mixture. At such times the trick put me in a rather bad humour; instead of

[1] This seems to have been a sort of nickname. Her real name, according to Pellico, was Angiola, or Angela.

becoming exalted by the drink I felt languid, yawned my head off, was hungry, threw myself on the bed and could not sleep.

Afterwards I would grumble about this to Zanze, and she would express her sympathy. One day, however, when I had scolded her harshly as if she deceived me, the poor child burst into tears and said:

'I have never deceived anybody, sir, and yet everybody calls me a deceiver!'

'Everybody? So I am not the only one to lose my temper over that muddy water?'

'I don't mean that, sir. Oh, if only you knew. . . . If only I could pour out my unhappy heart into yours. . . .'

'Well, don't cry like that! What on earth's the matter? I'm sorry if I scolded you unjustly. I do sincerely believe it wasn't your fault that such a brew was sent in to me.'

'Oh, I'm not crying for that, sir!'

At this I felt somewhat piqued, but smiled.

'So my scolding is only an excuse for you to shed tears over something quite different?'

'Oh yes, sir!'

'Well then, who has been calling you a deceiver?'

'My lover. . . .'

And she buried her head in her hands for shame. Then in her ingenuous trust she revealed a serio-comic idyll that touched me.

29

ZANZE

From that day I became, I do not know why, the confidant of the young girl who began to spend many hours in my company. Sometimes she would say to me: 'You are so good, sir, that I look on you as a child would its father.'

'That isn't much of a compliment!' I answered, brushing

aside her hand. 'I'm hardly thirty-two, and you already look on me as your father!'

'Oh come, sir! Shall I say then as my brother?' And with that she insisted on taking my hand and squeezing it affectionately. It was all very innocent. Yet when she did this I used to say to myself: 'Thank goodness she is no beauty. Otherwise this innocent familiarity might upset me.' At other times I would say: 'Thank goodness she is so immature. There is no danger of my ever falling in love with a girl of her age.'

Sometimes, however, I felt an uneasy twinge when the thought came that perhaps I had made a mistake in thinking her rather ugly, and had to admit that her figure and features were not at all irregular.

'If she were not so pale,' I would say then, 'and did not have those few freckles on her face she might even be called pretty.'

The truth is that it is impossible not to find some sort of enchantment in the presence, looks, words of a vivacious and affectionate young girl. I had done nothing, it is true, to win her affection, and I was in any case dear to her only 'as a father' or 'as a brother', whichever I wished to be; and that simply because she had read my *Francesca da Rimini* and my *Eufemio*, and because my verses made her cry so much. And also because, as she said, I was in prison without having either robbed or killed anyone.

How could I, who had fallen in love with Maddalena without seeing her, remain indifferent to the sisterly kindness, to the graceful little acts of flattery, to the excellent brews of coffee, of that 'sweet little Venetian jaileress'?[1]

It would be an imposture, then, to attribute to my own common-sense the fact that I did not fall in love with her. I did not do so simply because she had a lover already, one she was mad about. Had this not been the case it would have been disastrous! Yet I must admit that if the feeling which she aroused in me was not what is commonly known as love, it came pretty near to it. I wanted her to be happy, to succeed in winning for a

[1] Pellico is evidently quoting from some unknown poem when he calls Zanze a 'sweet little Venetian jaileress'.

husband the man to whom she was attracted. There was in me no slightest feeling of jealousy, no suspicion she might choose me as the object of her love. Yet whenever I heard the door open my heart would leap with the hope that it was Zanze. If it was not she then I was disconsolate, while if it was my heart would beat the quicker for joy.

Her parents, who had already formed a good opinion of me and knew that she was madly infatuated with another man, had no misgivings in allowing her to bring me my coffee almost every morning and sometimes in the evenings too.

Her simplicity and kindness were a delight.

'I'm so much in love with another,' she would say to me, 'and yet I do like to be with you! Whenever I can't see my lover I get bored everywhere except here.'

'Do you know why?'

'No I don't.'

'Well, I'll tell you. It's because I let you talk about your lover.'

'Maybe. But I think it's also because I think so highly of you.'

Poor girl! She had got into the confounded habit of taking hold of my hand and pressing it, not realizing that this pleased and upset me at the same time. Thank God that I can think of that good creature without the slightest remorse!

30

DANGEROUS AFFECTIONS

THESE pages would no doubt be more intriguing if Zanze had fallen in love with me, or if I, at least, had become delirious over her. Yet that simple affection which united us meant more to me than love, and if at times I was afraid that it might in my own foolish heart change into something else, I became sincerely upset at the thought.

Once when it seemed to me that this was about to happen, inconsolable at finding her (by some magic or other) a hundred times more beautiful than she had been at the beginning,

astonished also at the sadness that I sometimes felt when she was not with me and at the joy that her presence produced, I was curt with her for two days, thinking that this might help me wean her a little from her familiarity with me. But my stratagem was of little use. That girl was so patient and sympathetic! She leant her elbows on the window-sill and stood there looking at me in silence. Then she would say:

'You are bored, I think, sir, by my company. Yet if I could I would remain here all day just because I see that you need distraction. This bad humour of yours is a natural effect of loneliness. But chat a little and your bad mood will go. And if you won't chat, then I will.'

'About your lover, I suppose.'

'Oh, no, not always about him! I know how to speak of other things too.'

And in a manner simple yet graceful she began to tell me about her little domestic affairs; her mother's harshness, her father's good nature, her brothers' escapades: then unconsciously she would return to her subject, her unfortunate love.

I refused, however, to stop being short with her, hoping that this would vex her. But, either through sheer insensibility or by intention she pretended not to notice, so that in the end I had to calm down and, smiling, show that I was touched by, and grateful for, her affectionate patience. So I abandoned the ungrateful thought of vexing her in this way, and little by little my fears vanished. After all I was not infatuated with her. For a long time I examined my scruples, jotted down my reflections on the matter, and drew profit from developing them.

Sometimes men are afraid of unsubstantial spectres, and these need to be examined more attentively and closely in order to drive out the fear.

How could it be wrong for me to look forward to her visits with tender restlessness, to appreciate her sweetness, enjoy receiving her sympathy, return affection for affection, when our thoughts for one another were as pure as the purest thoughts of children, when the touch of her hands and her warm looks, though perturbing, filled me with a salutary reverence?

One evening as she was pouring out some great sorrow that she had suffered the poor girl threw her arms round my neck and covered my face with her tears. In this embrace there was nothing the slightest profane. A child could not embrace her own father with greater respect.

Yet afterwards I found my imagination deeply struck. The memory of that embrace came back to me and then I could think of nothing else.

The next time she abandoned herself to a similar outburst of filial trust I at once freed myself from her dear arms without pressing her to myself, without kissing her,[1] and stammering out:

'I beg of you, Zanze, never embrace me. It's not right!'

She stared at me, lowered her eyes, and blushed. It was, I am sure, the first time she read in my face the possibility of any weakness on my part for her.

From that moment, though she did not cease her familiarity, it became more respectful and more in harmony with my wishes.

I was grateful to her for it.

31

MORE OF ZANZE

I AM in no position to speak of the sufferings of others, but I must confess that, having closely examined those which it has been my lot to bear during my own life, I have always found them eventually turning out to my good. Yes, even that terrible heat which suffocated me, and the armies of mosquitoes

[1] In his MS, however, Pellico had written that he had kissed Zanze. It would seem, in fact, that Pellico did fall in love with the young Venetian, but that he did not like to admit it even to himself. It is also quite possible that he changed the original statement of the MS into the present one out of a desire not to embarrass Zanze, who was still alive when Pellico's book was published. As a matter of fact Zanze (according to Chateaubriand, who appears to have been somewhat sceptical towards Pellico) denied point-blank everything that Pellico had written about her and himself.

warring so ferociously against me. I have reflected on it a thousand times. Had I not been in this state of perpetual torture would I have been vigilant enough to keep myself unscathed from the darts of a love that threatened to overwhelm me and which, given Zanze's happy and affectionate character, could have been held under control only with great difficulty? If I sometimes trembled for myself in that state of mind, how could I have controlled my imagination in surroundings more pleasant, more in keeping with happiness?

There can be no doubt then that, given on the one hand the imprudence of Zanze's parents, who placed so much trust in me, and the imprudence of Zanze herself who did not foresee she could make me fall into a culpable infatuation, given too, the weakness of my own virtue, the suffocating heat of that oven and the stings of those merciless mosquitoes were for me a salutary cross.

This reflection reconciled me somewhat to those scourges. Yet sometimes I asked myself: 'Would you prefer to be free of them, move to a better cell with fresher air, but no longer see that affectionate creature?'

Frankly I did not have the courage to answer my own question.

When we feel warmly towards a person it is impossible to say how much pleasure we get from apparently trivial things. Often a word from Zanze, a smile, a tear, a turn of expression in her Venetian dialect, the movement of her arms in warding off mosquitoes from herself and me with handkerchief or fan, filled my heart with a childish content that lasted all day. Particularly dear to me was seeing her sadness melting as she spoke to me, noticing how my piety pleased her, how she let my advice guide her, and how her heart stirred whenever we spoke of virtue and of God.

'After we've talked about religion,' she would say, 'I pray more willingly and with more trust.'

There were times when she would suddenly break off some frivolous argument, take up my Bible, open it and kiss by chance a verse, which she would then ask me to translate and

comment upon for her. Then she would say: 'I wish that every time you read this verse again you may remember my kissing it.'

Actually her kisses were not always well directed especially if she happened to open the Book at the Song of Songs! When this happened, to prevent her blushing, I took advantage of her ignorance of Latin and used words and phrases to safeguard the holiness of the Scriptures and her innocence, for both of which I had the highest veneration. At such times, I never allowed myself to smile. Occasionally I would get into some difficulty when she did not quite grasp my faked version and asked me to translate the passage in question word for word, refusing to allow me to pass quickly on to something else.

32

ANOTHER SEPARATION

NOTHING is lasting on this earth. Zanze fell ill. On her visits in the first days of her illness she complained of severe headaches. Though in tears, she refused to tell me why, except to stammer out some words against her lover.

'He's a wicked man,' she would say, 'but may God forgive him.'

No matter how much I begged of her to unburden her heart to me as usual, I failed to discover what was making her suffer so.

One evening she said: 'I'll be back tomorrow morning.' But next day it was her mother who brought me coffee, and then one or other of the under-warders.

Zanze, I learned, was seriously ill. About her love affair the under-warders spoke to me in such ambiguous terms that I was flung into a great state of alarm. Had she been seduced? I must admit that I believed she had been, and felt deeply troubled. But I like to hope that the under-warders were lying.

After more than a month's illness the poor girl was taken into the country. I never saw her again.

It is impossible to describe how I wept over this loss. Oh, how it worsened the horror of my loneliness! How the thought of that dear creature being unhappy was far more bitter than the fact of her being so far away! Her affectionate sympathy had been such a comfort to me in my misery, but my sympathy for her was sterile. Yet she must have sensed that I wept for her, known that, had I been able, I would have made great sacrifices to bring her comfort, and should never cease to bless her and pray for her happiness.

Zanze's visits, all too brief though they had been, by interrupting so pleasantly the monotony of my perpetual meditation and silent study, by interweaving other ideas with mine, and arousing some tender emotion, had brought beauty to my misfortunes and intensified my desire to live.

After she went my cell became once again a tomb. For days I was crushed by such sadness that I could no longer find pleasure even in writing. This sadness, though, was tranquil, unlike the frenzies of before. Did this mean that I had already become more used to misfortune, more of a philosopher or Christian? Or was it merely that the suffocating heat of the cell laid low even the strength of my sorrows? The strength of my sorrows laid low? No, indeed! For I remember how sharply I felt them in the depths of my soul, all the more perhaps, because now I no longer wished to drive them away by cries and agitation.

No, my long apprenticeship in affliction had already made me more able to bear new ones by resigning myself to God's will. I had told myself so often that it was cowardly to complain, and now at last I was able to control complaints on the point of breaking out, and be ashamed that they should be at such a point.

The habit I had formed of putting my thoughts into writing had helped to strengthen my will, to disabuse me of the vanity of this life, and reduce the greater part of my reasonings to the following conclusions: there is a God, therefore infallible justice; therefore everything that happens to us is directed to

the best of ends, therefore our sufferings here on earth are for our own good.

Even my friendship with Zanze had been a help; it had softened my temperament. Her gentle approval had been for several months an encouragement not to fail in the duty, incumbent, I felt, on every man, to rise above fortune, good or ill, and thus be patient. Those few months of constancy bent my will to resignation.

Twice only did Zanze ever see me get angry. The first time was over the incident I have already related of the bad coffee. The second was as follows.

Every two or three weeks the warder brought me a letter from my family; this had always passed through the hands of the Commission and been rigorously mutilated with erasures in very black ink. One day, instead of erasing only a few sentences, they drew their hateful line through the entire letter except for the words '*Dearest Silvio*', at the beginning, and the greeting at the end '*We embrace you with all our hearts*'.

This so enraged me that in Zanze's presence I began yelling and bawling curses at all and sundry. The poor girl sympathized but at the same time scolded me for throwing over my own principles. I saw that she was right and stopped my cursing.

33

TREMERELLO

One day an under-warder came into my cell with an air of mystery and said: 'When Siora[1] Zanze was here . . . as she used to bring coffee, sir . . . and was in the habit of staying a long time talking to you, sir . . . and I was afraid that the cunning little thing might worm out all your secrets, sir . . .'

'She didn't worm out one!' I answered angrily. 'And if I had any secrets I wouldn't be such a fool as to let anyone get them out of me. Now go on.'

[1] Venetian dialect for *Miss, Mrs.*

'I'm so sorry, sir! I'd no intention of calling you a fool, but I didn't trust Siora Zanze. And now, sir, since you haven't anyone to come and keep you company . . . I trust . . . that . . .'

'Trust what, man? Come on now, out with it!'

'Well, swear you'll not betray me?'

'Oh! I can swear that easily enough, as I've never betrayed anyone.'

'So you do swear then, eh?'

'Yes, I swear not to betray you. But let me tell you, lout, that a man capable of betrayal is also capable of breaking his oath.'

He drew a letter from his pocket and handed it over with a trembling hand, begging me to destroy it when I had read it.

'Wait a moment,' said I as I opened the letter, 'and I'll destroy it in your presence just as soon as I've read it.'

'But sir, it needs answering, and I can't wait. Take your time. Let's just come to this understanding. When you hear someone coming remember that if it's me I'll be humming the song *I dreamt I was a cat*. In that case you needn't be afraid of surprise, and may keep in your pockets any paper you like. But if you don't hear that song then either it's not me, or there's someone with me. In that case you must not risk keeping any hidden paper because they might be coming to search the cell, and if you have any paper tear it up carefully and throw it out of the window.'

'Don't worry. I see that you have your wits about you. Well, I'll have mine too.'

'Yet you called me a "lout"!'

'You're right to bring that up,' I said, shaking his hand. 'Forgive me.'

Off he went and I read the letter.

'I am . . . [here the writer gave his name], one of your admirers. I know the whole of *Francesca da Rimini* by heart. They have arrested me for . . . [here he gave the reasons for his arrest and the date], and I'd give pints of my blood to be with you, or at least have a cell next to yours so that we might talk. Ever since I learned from "Tremerello" (let's call our go-between that, he trembles so) that you had been arrested and

why, I have been consumed with longing to tell you that no one feels for you more than I, no one loves you more than I. Do please be so good as to agree to the following suggestion: that we both try to lighten the burden of our loneliness by writing to each other. I promise you as a man of honour that not a soul would ever know of it from me and am sure that I can hope for similar secrecy from you if you agree. Meanwhile, so you may know something about me, I will give you a brief account of my life.'

The account followed.[1]

34

DOUBTS AND FEARS

ANY reader with a grain of imagination will easily understand the electrifying effect of such a letter on an unhappy prisoner, especially on one with a temperament by no means savage and a heart easily moved to love. My first impulse then was one of affection for the unknown writer, of sympathy for his misfortune, and of deep gratitude for his kindness towards me.

'Yes!' I exclaimed. 'I agree with your generous proposal. And may my letters bring you the consolation that this first letter of yours is even now bringing to me!'

Then with a boyish glee I read and re-read his letter, every phrase of which seemed to show a frank and noble soul, and blessed him a hundred times for writing it.

The sun was going down now, and it was the hour of prayer, my prayer. I felt that God was very near me, as I revived the memory of all His precious gifts to me and thanked Him with deep sincerity for His goodness to me in inventing ever new

[1] Pellico does not tell us the real name of his prison correspondent, nor does he tell us anything of the man's history. Later he tells his friend Oroboni (p. 140), but only because he is sure that Oroboni will keep his secret. It would appear, however, that Giuliano (the correspondent), was one of the *Carbonari* who had been arrested four years before for conspiracy.

ways to keep the faculties of my mind and heart from languishing.

I was standing upright on the sill of the large window of the cell, my arms thrust between the bars, my hands crossed in prayer in front of me. Beneath me was the church of San Marco, and on its leaden roof a prodigious multitude of pigeons was billing and cooing, settling down for the night, or filling the air with the unhindered beat of their wings. Before me stretched a superb sky, so that I dominated all that part of Venice which was visible from my cell. The distant sounds of human voices struck softly on my ears. In this unhappy but stupendous position I spoke to Him whose eyes alone saw me, and as I commended to His care my father, my mother, then one by one all the persons dear to me, it seemed to me that He said to me: 'Let my goodness strengthen you!' while I exclaimed: 'Yes, your goodness does strengthen me!'

I finished my prayer, moved and consoled, heedless of the stings that the mosquitoes had meantime given me at their pleasure.

That night, when my imagination excited to such a pitch had calmed down, and the mosquitoes began to get unbearable so that I again had to cover my face and hands, a vile thought came into my head. It made me shudder and when I tried to drive it out I could not.

Tremerello had hinted at some foul suspicion involving Zanze, that she had perhaps tried to worm my secrets from me! Zanze! That candid soul who knew nothing of politics and had no desire to know!

Her I could not doubt. 'But,' I asked myself, 'can I be as certain about Tremerello himself? What if that rascal is merely a cat's-paw in some cunning probe? What if that letter is a pure fabrication by someone to make me pass on important secrets to this new friend? Why, the prisoner who has written to me may not even exist. Or if he does, then he may be perfidiously trying to learn my secrets and buy his own freedom by revealing them. Or maybe he is an honest man and Tremerello is the real trickster, the one who wants to bring ruin on us both to gain a rise in wages!'

How vile, yet how natural, is the tendency of a man groaning in jail to see enemies and deceit everywhere! These doubts filled me with distress and discouragement. As far as Zanze herself was concerned I certainly could have no such doubts for a moment. Yet since Tremerello had uttered that accusation against her I was tormented by a half doubt, not indeed about her but about those who had allowed her to visit me in my cell. Had *they*, from their own zeal or owing to superior will, given her the job of spy? If they had, how badly she had served them!

What should I do about the unknown's letter? Should I stick closely to the strict and narrow-minded counsels of fear which are called prudence? Should I hand the letter back to Tremerello and say: 'I have no desire to risk my peace of mind'? But, what if there was no deceit? What if the unknown was really someone most worthy of friendship, worthy too for me to risk anything in order to temper the agony of his loneliness?

'Coward that you are!' I said to myself. 'You're maybe less than two steps from death, the fatal sentence may be pronounced against you any day now, and yet you will not undertake one more act of charity? No, I must answer, I must answer his letter! But what if someone by a stroke of ill-luck discovers this correspondence? Would not poor Tremerello be severely punished, though nobody could in conscience accuse *us* of committing a crime? Is this consideration not enough to make it an absolute duty on my part to refuse any clandestine correspondence?'

35

THE FIRST LETTER

I HAD a troubled evening, and could not close an eye all night, not knowing amid so many uncertainties what decision to take. Before dawn I jumped out of bed, climbed on to the window-sill and, since in all our difficulties we must consult God with confidence, listen to His inspirations and follow them, I turned to Him in prayer.

After praying for a long time I got down, brushed off the mosquitoes, stroked my swollen cheeks, and my decision was made. I would tell Tremerello of my fears in case the proposed correspondence got him into trouble; if he hesitated, I decided to give it all up, but if he was not afraid, then I would go ahead.

I walked up and down the cell until I heard him coming. He was humming the tune of *I dreamt I was a cat and you were stroking me.* Tremerello was bringing me my coffee.

I told him of my scruples, and spared no efforts to frighten him, but found him determined to serve, as he put it, *two such excellent gentlemen.* This determination of his gave the lie to the rabbit face that he had and the nickname we had given him. Well then, I'd hold firm too.

'I'll leave my wine for you,' I said to him, 'and you'll provide me with the paper necessary for this correspondence. Rest assured that if I hear the jingle of keys without that song of yours I'll destroy in a second any forbidden object I may have.'

'Well then, here's a sheet of paper, sir. I'll go on giving you one for as long as you want it. I've complete faith in your good sense.'

I scalded my tongue trying to gulp down the coffee fast. Tremerello then took himself off and I settled down to write.

Was I doing right? Was the decision I had taken really inspired by God, or was it not rather the result of natural impetuosity getting the upper hand, of my tendency to put before painful sacrifices anything that attracted me? Maybe it arose from a mixture of vain complacency for the esteem expressed for me by the unknown writer and of fear that he might think me a coward if I were to prefer prudent silence to a risky correspondence?

How could I solve these new doubts? In my answer to my fellow-prisoner I told him of them frankly, adding, none the less, that in my opinion when a man feels he is acting from good motives and not going openly against his conscience he need no longer be afraid of doing wrong. I suggested however that he too should consider in all seriousness what we were about to do, and to tell me frankly with what degree of calm or disquiet he might decide to go on with it. If, on further

reflection, he should come to the conclusion that our undertaking was too hazardous, I suggested that we should make ourselves forgo the consolation we hoped to derive from our correspondence and content ourselves with having come to know each other by the exchange of those few but indelible words and by a mutual guarantee of friendship.

Since my aim was to make myself thoroughly known to him I wrote him four pages afire with the most sincere affection, in which, after a few words about my imprisonment, I spoke from a full heart of my family and of certain private affairs of mine.

That evening the letter was taken off. I felt very tired since I had not closed an eye the previous night. Sleep, then, did not wait to be begged so that next morning I awoke fresh and light-hearted, with a quiver of pleasure at the thought that in a few minutes I might have my friend's answer in my hands.

36

THE ANSWER

THE answer arrived with my coffee. I threw my arms round Tremerello's neck and cried warmly: 'May God reward you for such an act of charity!'

My suspicions of him and of the unknown had vanished, though I could not say why. Maybe because they had been distasteful, or because they now struck me as unfounded, since I had always been careful never to speak of politics; or even because, while I admire the genius of Tacitus, I have little faith in the justice of his tendency to see for the most part the darkest side of everything.[1]

[1] Contrary to what Pellico says of himself in this place he was by nature and temperament anything but an optimist. Writing to his friend Confalonieri (footnote 2, p. 100) in September 1837, he says: '*Our poor human race is forever under the tyranny of its sins, of its mistakes, and of a horrible and universal ferment of egoism, envy, and passion.*' Twenty years earlier, in August 1817, he had written to another of his and Foscolo's friends, Quirina Magiotti-Mocenni: 'My entire life is nothing but sorrow.'

Giuliano (as the writer chose to sign himself) began his letter by some kind remarks, and told me that he had no misgivings at all about our proposed correspondence. He then went on to make mild fun about my own scruples, and eventually became rather stinging. Towards the end of his letter, after an eloquent eulogy on sincerity, he asked my forgiveness for not hiding the disappointment he had felt on recognizing in me, as he put it, 'a certain scrupulous hesitation, a certain Christian subtlety of conscience which cannot harmonize with true philosophy'.

'I will always hold you in esteem,' he added, 'even if we cannot agree on this point. But the sincerity I profess makes me tell you that I have no religion, that I loathe them all, that I take the name of Giuliano *out of modesty*, because although that good Emperor was an enemy of Christianity I actually go much farther than he. The crowned Julian believed in God and had certain bigotries of his own; I have none, I do not believe in God, for me all virtue is to love both truth and the persons trying to find it, and to hate everyone who does not please me.'

He went on in this fashion, hitting out right and left at Christianity, but proving nothing, extolling with pompous energy the perfection of his irreligious virtue, and in mock-serious language singing the praises of the Emperor Julian for his apostasy and his *philanthropic attempt* to blot out from the face of the earth all traces of the Gospel.

Then, afraid of having offended my opinions too deeply, he again asked forgiveness and again declaimed against the too-frequent lack of sincerity among men. Once more he expressed his great desire to keep in touch with me, and sent his regards.

In a postscript he wrote: 'I have *no* scruples except maybe that of not being frank enough. So I cannot refrain from telling you that I suspect the Christian language you used towards me to be a pose. I earnestly hope so. And if it is, then throw away your mask. I have set you the example.'

I find it impossible to convey the strange effect of that letter on me. The first few lines had set my pulse racing as if I had

been reading a love-letter, then an icy hand seemed to close over my heart. His sarcastic references to my conscientiousness I found offensive. How sorry I was at having opened relations with this man. I have the greatest contempt for cynicism; for me it is the most unphilosophical, the most uncouth of all human tendencies; and intellectual arrogance does not impress me.

When I came to the end of his letter I took it between the thumb and forefinger of one hand and the thumb and forefinger of the other; then raising my left hand I brought my right hand down sharply, so that I now held half a letter in each hand.

37

SECOND THOUGHTS

I STOOD looking at the two halves brooding a second on the inconsistency of human things and the falsity of their appearances.

A little while ago I was so longing for this letter, and now I am tearing it up in anger! A little while ago, I felt such a presentiment of friendship with this companion in misfortune, such a certainty of mutual consolation, such readiness to show him every affection, and now I am calling him insolent!

Placing the two halves of the letter on top of one another, and grasping them as before between the forefinger and thumb of one hand and the forefinger and thumb of the other, I again raised my left hand, and again swiftly brought down my right. Just as I was about to go through the same movements once more one of the four quarters of the letter fell out of my hands. I bent down to retrieve it, and in the short interval between bending down and straightening again I changed my mind and began to want to re-read that arrogant screed.

I sat down, fitted the four pieces together on my Bible, and read their contents. Then leaving them there I walked up and

down the cell, returned to read them again, and thought to myself:

'If I don't answer he'll think me so overwhelmed with confusion that I'm afraid to show myself again before the eyes of so mighty a Hercules! Let us answer him, politely of course, that it is no cowardice for a man to think things over, to hesitate when he has a decision to make which may be dangerous, maybe more dangerous for others than for himself. Let him learn that true courage does not consist of scoffing at a man's conscience, that true dignity is not found in arrogance. Let us explain how reasonable is Christianity, and how untenable is unbelief. Finally, if this man Giuliano expresses opinions so deeply opposed to my own, if he does not spare me his biting sarcasm and shows himself so little eager to win my good will, is that at least proof that he is not a spy? Or could this unmerciful flogging by him of my self-love be an actor's touch? No! I cannot believe it. Just because I'm offended by his daring sallies I'm trying to convince myself in my wickedness that he must surely be the most degraded of men. And to think that I have condemned these same vulgar malicious thoughts so often in others! No, Giuliano is what he is, nothing more; insolent, but not a spy. Have I then the right to call by the hateful name of *insolence* what he considers sincerity? Is that your humility, you hypocrite? A man need only by error of judgement hold false opinions and scoff at my own faith for me at once to arrogate to myself the right to despise him! God knows if this resentful humility and malevolent zeal in the heart of one who is a Christian are not worse than the impudent sincerity of that unbeliever. Maybe it needs only a ray of grace to transform his energetic love of the truth into a faith firmer than my own. Would it not be better for me to pray for him than to get angry with him and think myself superior? How did I know that while I, in my fury, was tearing his letter to pieces he was not re-reading mine with affectionate benevolence and such trust in my goodness as to think me incapable of taking offence at his frank language? Which is the more evil of us two? One who loves but says, "*I am not a Christian*",

or one who says "*I am a Christian*", but does not love? It is hard enough to know a person even after long years of intimacy, and here I am wanting to pass judgement on this man on the strength of one letter! Among so many possibilities is it not just possible that, without admitting as much to himself, he is not at all satisfied with his atheism, and so tries his hardest to make me fight him, in the secret hope that he will have to give way. May it be so!

'O almighty God, in whose hands even the most unworthy instruments can be made useful, choose me, choose me for this work! Inspire me with such strong and holy arguments that they will convince this unhappy man and draw him to bless You and to learn that far from You every virtue is a contradiction!'

38

PLAN OF CAMPAIGN

WITHOUT a trace of anger I tore the four quarters of the letter into smaller bits, went to the window with them, thrust out my hand, and then stood there contemplating the fortunes of the scraps of paper at the mercy of the wind. Some came to rest on the lead roof of the church, but others whirled around for a long time as they fluttered to the ground. There they were so scattered that there was no danger of anyone collecting them and understanding their secret.

After this I wrote to Giuliano, taking great care not to feel and not to sound vexed. I laughed at his fear that I was carrying delicacy of conscience to a degree irreconcilable with philosophy, and asked him to suspend judgement at least on this point. I praised him for his profession of sincerity and assured him that in this he would find me equal to himself, adding that in order to prove it I was getting ready to defend Christianity, 'fully convinced,' I wrote, 'that as I will always be ready to lend a friendly ear to your opinions so you too will have the generosity to listen peaceably to mine.'

My intention was to carry out this defence step by step. So I began it by carefully analysing the essence of Christianity: a cult of God free from superstitions, brotherhood of men, man's perpetual aspiration to virtue, humility without meanness of soul, dignity without pride, and the model, a God made man. What could be more philosophic or sublime?

Later I intended to show that though this deep wisdom had filtered into the mind of every man seeking after the truth by the light of human reason alone, it had not been universally recognized until the Divine Teacher had come into the world and brought about its universal diffusion with means that by human standards were the weakest, thus giving a stupendous proof of Himself.[1] What the greatest philosophers had failed to do, smash idolatry and preach the universal brotherhood of men, had been done by a few uneducated Apostles. From that day too the emancipation of slaves had become more and more frequent until at last a state of society emerged which the ancient philosophers had considered an impossibility, a civilization without slaves.

Finally, a review of history since the time of Christ was to prove that the religion founded by Him had always shown itself to be adaptable to every degree of civilization; so it was false to say that with civilization's advance the Gospel could no longer fit in.

I wrote in microscopic script and at length, but was unable none the less to get very far since my paper ran out. On reading and re-reading this introduction it struck me as well done. Not one sentence did it contain of resentment at Giuliano's sarcasm, while it abounded in warm expressions dictated by a heart completely reduced to tolerance.

The letter was sent off. Next morning I waited anxiously for

[1] It is just possible that Pellico is here expressing the profoundly true assertion of St. Augustine (following in the footsteps of Origen) that even *as we believe* (in Christ the Eternal Word of God and the Saviour of mankind) *both as abiding with the Father and as having come in the flesh, so also, of old, men believed in Him both as abiding with the Father and as to come in the flesh . . . so that it is one and the same true religion then and now, only under different names.*

the answer. Tremerello came in and said: 'That gentleman has been unable to write, but he asks you please to carry on with your joke.'

'Joke, eh?' I exclaimed. 'He couldn't have said *joke*. You've misunderstood.'

Tremerello shrugged:

'All right, I've misunderstood him.'

'But d'you really think he could have said *joke*?'

'As much as I think that at this moment I hear the strokes of the bell of San Marco.' (The big bell was just in fact ringing out.)

I drank the coffee and fell silent.

'But tell me,' I said at last, 'had that gentleman read the whole of my letter then?'

'I think so, because he was laughing, laughing fit to burst, and using your letter as a ball, tossing it up into the air, and when I told him not to forget to destroy it later he destroyed it at once.'

'All right!'

I handed the coffee-cup back to Tremerello with the remark that it was easy to see that the coffee had been made by Siora Bettina.[1]

'Did you find it bad?'

'Awful!'

'Yet I made it, sir, and I assure you I made it strong and there were no grounds.'

'My palate must be out of order.'

[1] This was Zanze's mother. Her full name was Elizabetta (Bettina) Brollo.

39

REFLECTIONS ON GIULIANO

ALL morning I paced up and down the cell fuming.

'What sort of man is this?' I asked myself. 'Why did he call my letter a joke? Why did he laugh at it and use it as a ball to play with? Why hasn't he sent me even one line in reply? They are all the same, these atheists! Because they feel the weakness of their opinions, as soon as anybody gets ready to rebut them they refuse to listen, laugh at him and make show of a superior intelligence which no longer needs to examine anything. Poor fools! When in fact has there ever been a philosophy not based on examination, devoid of seriousness? If it is true that Democritus[1] was always laughing he must have been a clown!

'But it serves me right! Why did I start this correspondence? To deceive myself on his account for one moment was pardonable. But when I saw the man was insolent I was surely a fool to write again!'

So I determined not to write to him any more. During dinner, however, Tremerello took my wine, poured it into a flask and then hid it away in his pocket, saying:

'Oh, I remember I've some paper here to give you.'

He handed me the paper and went out.

And as I sat looking at those white sheets I felt the temptation coming over me to write for the last time to Giuliano, and to take my leave of him with a good lesson on the shamefulness of insolence.

'Well,' I exclaimed, 'this is surely a wonderful temptation! To pay back scorn with scorn and so make him hate Christianity even more by letting him see in me a Christian all impatience and pride! No, that will not do. Let's break off this correspon-

[1] The famous Greek philosopher, Democritus (*c.* 470–*c.* 380 B.C.), was given the sobriquet of *The Laughing Philosopher*. He considered all men more or less mad, and laughed at their madness.

dence completely. But then if I break it off like this, so tartly, is he not going to say just the same that I've let myself be overcome by impatience and pride? It is better to write to him once again without rancour. But then if I am able to write to him without rancour would it not be better to ignore his laughter and that label of joke attached to my letter? Would it not be better to carry on patiently with my defence of Christianity?'

I thought this over a bit, then decided to write in that vein.

That evening I sent off my letter, and next morning I received a few lines thanking me very coldly, but without any of the biting expressions of the previous letter, and also without the slightest hint of approval or of an invitation to continue.

The note put me out. But I determined to carry on to the very end.

My thesis was one that could not be disposed of in a few words so it became the subject of five or six more long letters. For each of these Giuliano thanked me with a laconic note containing some declamatory outbursts extraneous to our theme, one minute cursing his enemies, the next laughing at himself for having cursed them, and saying it was natural for the strong to oppress the weak and his only regret was that he himself was not one of the strong; one minute telling me of his love affairs, the next complaining of the hold they had over his tormented imagination.

In his answer to my last letter on Christianity, however, he told me that he was preparing me a detailed reply. I waited for this more than a week during which he went on writing to me every day about quite different matters, mostly obscenities. I asked him to remember the answer that he owed me and advised him to force his mind to weigh fairly all the arguments I had brought against him.

His reply was somewhat peevish, and attributed to himself with lavish hand the qualities of a philosopher, a true man, a man who had no need to weigh so much in order to realize that fireflies were not lanterns. Then he went back to lighthearted accounts of scandalous adventures.

40

GIULIANO'S ILLNESS

I WENT on being patient so as not to be called bigoted and intolerant, and also because I had not given up hope that a period of serious thought might follow this fever of erotic buffooneries. At the same time, I showed disapproval of his lack of reverence for women and of his pagan idea of love-making, as well as expressing my compassion for the poor women who he told me had been his victims.

He pretended to have little faith in my disapproval, and repeated:

'Though you keep on about immorality I'm sure that I amuse you by my stories. Every man loves pleasure as much as I do, but not every man is frank enough to speak of it openly. I'll tell you so many of these stories that you'll be spellbound and feel obliged in conscience to applaud me.'

Weeks went by and he did not once refrain from recounting these stories, and I, hoping as I always did with every letter to find him writing of other matters, let curiosity overcome me and read everything that he wrote, so that my mind was, if not seduced, at least in a state of agitation and far removed from noble and holy thoughts. The company of the degenerate degenerates you unless your virtue is much out of the ordinary, much stronger than mine.

'And there,' I said to myself, 'is your punishment for your presumption! This is what you get for trying to be a missionary without the necessary holiness!'

One day I decided to write to him as follows:

'Up to now I've tried to turn your attention to other matters, but you always send me stories that, as I've told you frankly, I do not like. If you are willing to discuss worthier things we will carry on with our correspondence. Otherwise let us shake hands and then each keep himself to himself.'

Two days passed without an answer, and at first I was glad.

'Blessed solitude!' I kept on exclaiming. 'How much less bitter you are than company when it is both discordant and degrading! No longer shall I be worried by reading his dirty stories, or wearied in vain by opposing them with sentiments worthy of a man. Instead I'll speak with God again, with the beloved memories of my family and true friends. I shall read the Bible again more assiduously, write my thoughts down on the table top, examine my heart again to its depths, and strive to correct it. Once more I'll turn and taste the joys of blameless sadness, far preferable to those lively but evil images.'

Every time that Tremerello came into the cell now he would say:

'There's no answer yet.'

'Very well,' I would reply.

The third day he said:

'So-and-So is rather ill.'

'What's the matter with him?'

'He won't say, but he is always lying on his bed. He won't eat, won't drink, and is in a bad temper.'

Moved at the thought that he was suffering and had no one to comfort him I exclaimed in words that burst from my lips, or rather from my heart:

'I'll write him a few lines!'

'I will take it over this evening,' said Tremerello as he went out. Feeling somewhat embarrassed I sat down at the table. 'Am I doing right in taking up this correspondence again?' I asked myself. 'Just now I was singing the praises of solitude as a re-found treasure! What inconstancy is mine! And yet that poor wretch is neither eating nor drinking; he must be ill. Is this the moment to abandon him? My last note was harsh, and may have contributed to affect him. Despite our different ways of thinking he might never have broken off our friendship. My note may have seemed to him as more unkind than it really was; and he may have taken it as a final contemptuous dismissal.'

41
THE END OF THE CORRESPONDENCE

I WROTE as follows:

'I hear that you are not well and am deeply grieved at the news. With all my heart I should like to be with you and help you as a friend. I hope your bad health alone has been the reason for your silence during the last three days. You were not offended by my note the other day, were you? It was written, believe me, without the slightest unkindness and only in order to draw you to speak of more serious matters. If it hurts you to write just send me precise news of your health. Every day I'll send you a little note to distract you and remind you that I wish you well.'

Never could I have imagined the letter which he sent me in reply! It began as follows:

'I renounce your friendship. If you do not know what to do with my friendship I do not know what to do with yours. I am not a man to forgive offences. I am not a man that returns once rejected. Because you know I am ill you, like a hypocrite, draw near again in the hope that sickness may weaken my spirit and bring me to listen to your sermons. . . .'

He went on in this strain, vituperating me violently, mocking me, caricaturing everything I had said about religion and morals, and protesting that he intended to live and die exactly as he always had lived, with the deepest hatred as well as the deepest contempt for every philosophy different from his own.

I was aghast.

'Fine conversions I make!' I exclaimed in sorrow and horror. 'God is my witness that my intentions were pure. No, I have not deserved these insults. Patience then! It is one more disillusion. Upon his own head be it if he imagines offences against himself, so as to have the pleasure of not forgiving them. I am not bound to do more than I have done.'

After a few days, though, my indignation calmed down, and I began to think that one frenzied letter could have been the fruit of a passing fit of excitement.

'Maybe he's ashamed of it already,' I said to myself, 'but is too proud to admit his fault. Would it not be an act of generosity to write to him again now that he has had time to calm down?'

It cost me a great deal to sacrifice my self-love in this way but I did it. The man who humbles himself out of no base motive does not thereby cheapen himself, whatever unjust scorn he may have to suffer for it.

In answer I had a letter less violent but no less insulting. The writer, unappeased, said that he admired my evangelical moderation, and then went on:

'So let us take up our correspondence again. But let us be frank. We have no mutual affection. We write to each other solely to amuse ourselves, by jotting down freely everything that comes into our heads; in your case your seraphic ideas, in mine my blasphemies; you, your ecstasies about the dignity of men and women, I, the simple accounts of my profanations; I hope to convert you, you to convert me. Send me an answer if you like my pact.'

I answered:

'Yours is no pact but a mockery. I was too full of good will towards you. Conscience does not bind me to anything more than to wish you all happiness in this life and the next.'

Such was the end of my clandestine relations with a man more exasperated perhaps (who can tell?) by misfortune and made delirious by despair, than evil.

42

STILL ANOTHER CELL

As days went by without incident I came to bless my solitude again.

Summer ended; in the latter half of September the heat began to abate. October came: I congratulated myself on occupying a cell that would be cosy in winter.

But one morning the warder came in and told me that he had orders to transfer me to another cell.

'And where to?'

'A few steps away, to a cooler cell.'

'Why didn't they think of it when I was dying of heat, when the air was all mosquitoes and the bed all bugs?'

'No order came before.'

'Patience then! Let's go.'

Though I had suffered a great deal in that cell I was sorry to leave it; not only because it would be excellent in the cold season, but for many other reasons. Those ants of mine were there, the ants that I had loved and fed with the care I'd call (if it didn't sound ridiculous) almost that of a father. That little spider of mine about which I have already spoken had, it is true, left the cell for some reason or other a few days before, but I said to myself: 'Who knows? It may remember me and come back. But now I'm leaving it may come back and find the cell empty, or if there is another "guest" here he may hate spiders and bring down that lovely web with a slipper and then squash the poor spider!'

And, had not the dreariness of that cell been brightened by Zanze's compassion? So often she had leaned against that window, and let the crumbs of her *buzzolai*[1] fall generously on my ants. There, it was, that she used to sit; here, that she told me that story; here another; there she used to lean over my table and let her tears fall!

[1] These were a kind of sweet pastry.

The cell into which they put me was also under the lead roof, but facing north and west, with two windows, one on either side. A home of perpetual chills and, in the harsh winter months, of horrible icy cold. The window facing west was very large, the other to the north small and placed high in the wall above my bed. I looked out through the large window first and saw that it gave on to the Patriarch's palace. In a wing of the building extending slightly to my right and in another part jutting out opposite were other cells near mine, one above the other. The one below had a huge window through which I could see an elegantly dressed man walking up and down inside. It was Signor Caporali from Cesena.[1] He caught sight of me, signalled to me, and we exchanged names.

I was now curious to find out what my other window looked on to. So I placed a small table on the bed, and on the table a chair, and then clambered on to the top and found myself on a level with a section of the palace roof, beyond which I could see a good part of the city and lagoon.

I stood gazing out at that lovely view, and even when I heard the door of the cell opening did not move. It was the warder, who on seeing me clinging up there and forgetting that I could not pass through the bars like a mouse, thought that I was trying to escape. In a fleeting instant of agitation he leaped on to the bed despite the sciatica tormenting him, and grabbed hold of me by the legs, screeching like an eagle meanwhile.

'But don't you see, you dolt,' I said to him, 'that it's impossible to escape because of these bars? Don't you understand that I climbed up here just from curiosity?'

'I see it, sir, I see it all right, and I do understand, but come

[1] Pietro Caporali was arrested by the Austrian police for his activities as a *Carbonaro*, found guilty, and expelled from Austrian territory in Italy. He took refuge in Perugia, but was arrested there by the authorities of the Papal States (who had already, in 1821, banished him from their territory) for his continued *Carbonaro* activities, and sentenced to life imprisonment. He was pardoned in 1831 but died soon after almost mad with grief.

down, come down, I tell you! These are temptations for you to escape!'

I laughed at the idea but I had to get down.

43

NEW ACQUAINTANCES

At the windows of the cells to my right I recognized six other prisoners, all detained for political reasons.

Thus, as I was preparing to face a greater solitude than in the past, I found myself in a sort of little world. At first I was sorry because the long months of living like a hermit had already made me somewhat unsociable, and also because the unpleasant outcome of my acquaintance with Giuliano filled me with suspicion.

None the less the little conversation we had, partly by words and partly by signs, soon struck me as beneficial, if not as a stimulus to cheerfulness, at least as a distraction. I made no mention to anyone of my association with Giuliano because we had given each other our word of honour that the secret would be buried with us alone. If I mention it in these memoirs it is because whoever may read them would find it impossible to guess which of the numerous prisoners in those cells was Giuliano.

To the new acquaintances I made among my fellow-prisoners was soon added another, a very consoling one for me. From the large window of my cell I could see, beyond the cells in the section that jutted out opposite me, a forest of roofs adorned with chimney-pots, roof-loggias, towers and cupolas, a forest sweeping away to lose itself in sea and sky. In the house nearest me, in what was one of the wings of the Patriarch's palace, lived a kind-hearted family who won my gratitude by showing their pity for me by their greetings. A wave, a word of love for those in distress is great charity.

From a window there one day a slip of a boy of nine or

ten made a gesture as if to lift up his puny arms towards me, and I heard him call:

'Mamma, Mamma, they've put somebody up there in the *Piombi*! Oh, you poor prisoner, who are you?'

'I'm Silvio Pellico,' I called back, and another boy, a little bigger than the first, ran to the window and cried out:

'You're Silvio Pellico, are you?'

'Yes, and you, dear children, who're you?'

'My name is Antonio S.,[1] and this is my brother Giuseppe.'

At this point he turned round and said:

'What else am I to ask him?'

A woman, who I suppose was their mother and was half hidden, suggested kind words for those dear children of hers to say which they repeated to me while I thanked them, most touched.

Those conversations were very short and we had to be careful not to abuse them lest the warder got annoyed; but at dawn, noon, and evening they were repeated, to my great joy. After a lamp was lit and the woman was about to close the window the children would cry out:

'Good night, Silvio!'

And she, emboldened by darkness, would repeat in a voice shaking with emotion:

'Good night, Silvio! Courage!'

When the children were having their breakfast or afternoon meal they'd say:

'If only we could give you some of our coffee and milk! If only we could give you some of our *buzzolai*! Don't forget to come to see us the day you're set free, and we'll give you piping hot *buzzolai*, and lots of kisses!'

[1] The surname appears in the MS as Samueli. Pellico probably omitted it for reasons easily understood by the modern reader.

44

SORROWFUL MEMORIES

THE month of October marked my worst anniversary. I had been arrested on the 13th of this month a year before. A number of other sorrowful memories were associated with this same month. In October two years before a decent man whom I much esteemed, had been drowned in an accident on the Ticino.[1] In October three years before Odoardo Briche,[2] whom I loved like a son, had accidentally killed himself with a gun. And in an October of my early youth another heavy sorrow had come upon me.[3] I am not superstitious but the fatal meeting of such unhappy memories in that month made me very sad.

When chatting with those two boys from my window or with my fellow-prisoners I would put up a pretence of happiness, but no sooner was I back again in my den than an indescribable weight of sorrow fell like lead on my heart. When I took up my pen to compose verses or attend to some other literary matter, an irresistible force seemed to compel me to write something quite different: long letters, that is, which I could never send, and in which I poured out all my

[1] On 18 October 1819 Count Sartirana, a brother of Lodovico di Breme and a man whom Pellico held in the highest esteem, was thrown out of a carriage which overturned while crossing a bridge over the Ticino, and drowned.

[2] A youth (he was only 17) to whom Pellico had been deeply attached and who, for some unknown reason, committed suicide in 1818. They found by his side, it is said, a copy of Foscolo's *Letters of Jacopo Ortis* (see footnote 2, p. 40), to which he had been introduced by Pellico—a fact that Pellico was never to forget. The death of this unhappy young nobleman, once Pellico's pupil, is described in the text as having been accidental, but it is clear that in this Pellico was moved by compassion for the boy's parents.

[3] It is thought that Pellico refers here to his love for a young girl, Carlottina, a year younger than himself. He was fifteen at the time. She had not returned his love, and to add to Pellico's sorrow, she had died soon after he had fallen in love with her.

heart to my beloved family; letters written on the table-top and then scraped off, full of warmth and tenderness and reminiscences of the happiness that I had enjoyed in the company of parents, brothers, and sisters, so indulgent and so loving. My longing for them all inspired me with an infinity of impassioned sentiments, so that even after writing for hours on end there were always others waiting to be expressed.

All this was to tell myself the story of my own life in another form, deceive myself by going over the past with a fine brush, and force myself to keep my eyes on happy years that were no more. But, O God, how many times after I had painted a lively picture of some aspect of happier days, so drugging my imagination that I felt I was actually with the persons to whom I was writing, was I not suddenly brought back to reality, and let the pen fall from my fingers in horror. Truly terrifying moments. I had experienced them at other times, but never with convulsions equal to those that now took hold of me.

These convulsions and the anguish arising from them I attributed to over-stimulation from the letter-form I was using for those writings, as well as by my addressing them to persons so dear to me. I tried to turn my mind to something else, and could not. I tried to get away at least from the letter-form, and could not. Whenever I took up my pen and began to write, the result was always a letter full of tenderness and sorrow.

'Am I no longer in control of my own will?' I asked myself. 'Is this compulsion to do what I would rather not do due to some upheaval in my brain? Such a thing has never happened to me before. It would have been understandable in the first days of my imprisonment; but now that I have become accustomed to prison life, now that my imagination should have calmed down, now that I am fortified with so many philosophical and religious reflections, why do I become the slave of these blind cravings of my heart, and behave so childishly? Let us, then, give our attention to something else.'

I tried to pray, even to wear myself out with the study of German. Vain efforts. I always caught myself going back to write another letter.

45

INSOMNIA AND HALLUCINATIONS

My state was a real illness; I am not sure that I would not call it some kind of somnambulism. No doubt it was the effect of exhaustion, resulting from too much thinking and sitting up at nights.

It got worse. My nights became constantly sleepless and what was more, feverish. In vain I stopped taking coffee at night: insomnia persisted.

There seemed to be two men in me, one forever wanting to write letters, and another wanting to do something else.

'Well then,' I said to myself, 'let us come to an agreement: you may write letters, but you must write them in German; so we'll learn the language!'

From that day I wrote everything in bad German, and so at least I made some progress in my study of the language.

Every morning a stupor would come over my exhausted brain after its long vigil. In a dream, or rather a delirium, I seemed to see my father or mother or some other person dear to me in despair about my fate. I heard their pitiful sobs, and soon after awoke, sobbing myself and terrified.

Sometimes during those fleeting dreams I seemed to hear my mother comforting the others as she came with them into the cell, and speaking saintly words to me about the duty of resignation. But just when I was congratulating her on her courage and the others' courage, she would suddenly burst into tears, and all wept with her. No one can tell the torments I went through at such times.

To escape from this misery I tried not going to bed at all. I kept the light burning all night[1] and remained seated at the

[1] Prisoners were very strictly forbidden to have lights burning in their cells. Pellico, however, tells us at least three times (see pp. 52 and 53, and page 88) that he had a light burning in his cell. It would seem, then, that he

table to read or write. But what was the use? The moment would come when, fully awake as I was, I read without understanding a word, my brain utterly incapable of formulating a single thought. At such times I used to copy out something or other, but did so thinking of things quite unconnected with what I was writing; of my afflictions, that is.

Yet if I went to bed it was worse. Every position was unbearable; shaken by convulsive spasms I had to get up. Or if I did manage to fall asleep for a little those desperate dreams did me more harm than if I had stayed awake.

My prayers were arid, yet I would repeat them often; not by using many words but by calling on God, on God united to man and knowing human sorrows.

During those nights of horror my phantasy would sometimes raise me to such a pitch that I imagined, even though awake, hearing groans or stifled laughter in the cell. I had ceased to believe in witches and goblins as soon as I had left my childhood behind me, but that laughter and those groans terrified me, and not knowing how to find any explanation of them I began to wonder if I was not the plaything of hidden and malignant powers. Several times I took hold of the lamp with a trembling hand and looked under the bed to see if somebody was hiding there and mocking me. Several times I wondered if they had not taken me from my old cell and put me into this one because there was a trap-door in the floor or some secret opening in the walls from which my captors spied on all I did, taking a cruel delight in terrifying me. If I was at the table I imagined that somebody was tugging at my clothes, or that a book had been pushed and made to fall on the floor, or that some person behind me was blowing on the light to put it out. Then I would spring to my feet and peer around me, pace suspiciously up and down the cell and ask myself if I had gone mad or was still in my right senses. I could no longer

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managed to cajole some kind-hearted under-warder (and he met many such in the course of his wanderings from cell to cell) into supplying him with a lamp or a candle.

distinguish reality from illusion in what I saw and heard, and cried out:

Deus meus, Deus meus, ut quid dereligquisti me?[1]

46

THE CALM AFTER THE STORM

Once, after going to bed just before dawn, I felt absolutely certain of having put my handkerchief under the pillow. On waking as usual after a moment's stupor I thought they were trying to strangle me. My neck felt wrapped tight with something. Strange, it was wrapped in my own handkerchief, tied firmly with a number of knots! I could have sworn I had not tied those knots, had not touched the handkerchief from the moment of putting it under the pillow. I must have done it in my dream or delirium without having the faintest memory of it; but this I could not bring myself to believe, and from that moment expected every night to be strangled.[2]

Ravings such as these, I know, must strike others as ridiculous, but they were such an agony to me that I still shudder at the memory of them. Every morning they vanished with the dawn; and as long as the light of day lasted I felt my heart so resilient against their terror that it seemed impossible I should ever suffer them again. But as soon as the sun went down I began to shiver, and each night brought back the horrid fantasies of the night before.

The greater my weakness in the hours of darkness the greater were my efforts to appear cheerful when speaking to my fellow-prisoners, or the two boys in the Patriarch's palace,

[1] A quotation from the Gospel according to St. Matthew, xxvii. 45: 'My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?'

[2] There can be no doubt that it was a case of somnambulism. Pellico almost died of sheer fright while he was still a baby, and this, according to his biographers, left an indelible mark on him.

or my warders; no one who heard me joking as I did could have suspected the wretched infirmity from which I was suffering. I used to hope those efforts of mine would give me new strength; but they were of no use. Those nocturnal apparitions that I called nonsense by day became terrifying realities for me with the return of night.

Had I dared I would have begged the Commission to give me another cell, but I could never bring myself to because I was afraid to make them laugh at me.

When every argument, every resolution, all study and all prayer proved in vain, I was seized with the horrible idea that I had been utterly and forever forsaken by God. All the evil sophisms against Providence that a few weeks before, when I was still in my right senses, had appeared to me to be so foolish, now began to hammer away violently at my brain to catch my attention. For several days I fought against this temptation, then abandoned myself to it.

The goodness of religion I denied; I repeated what I had heard from rabid atheists, what Giuliano had only recently written: 'Religion in only good for softening the brain!' I claimed the right to believe that my mind would be strengthened by renouncing God. Crazy belief! I denied God, and yet could not deny the unseen and evil beings that seemed to surround me and feed on my sorrows.

How can I describe that martyrdom? Is it enough to call it a sickness, or was it not at the same time a divine punishment to throw down my pride, to make me understand that without a special grace I could become as incredulous as Giuliano, and even more foolish than he?

Whatever it may have been, God delivered me from so great an evil when I was least expecting it.

One morning after I had swallowed my coffee I was seized by violent vomiting and spasmodic pains. I thought they had poisoned me. Exhausted by vomiting and bathed in sweat I lay down on the bed; towards midday I fell asleep, and slept peacefully till evening. On waking I was astonished at sleeping so peacefully and, no longer feeling drowsy, got up, 'Because,'

as I said to myself, 'I shall have more strength on my feet against the usual terrors.'

But the terrors did not come. Exultant in the fullness of my gratitude I felt God once again, and threw myself to the floor to adore Him and ask His pardon for having denied Him for many days. This outburst of joy drained away my energies so that after I had been kneeling for some time, my body supported by a chair, I was once more overcome by drowsiness, and fell asleep in that position.

An hour, or perhaps several hours later (I cannot tell), I was again half awake, and had hardly time to throw myself, dressed as I was, on to the bed before I fell asleep again and slept until dawn. All that day I still felt sleepy, and though I went early to bed that evening I slept through the entire night. What crisis could I have been through? I do not know, but I was cured.

47

SENTENCES OF DEATH

As soon as the nausea and headaches from which I had suffered so long stopped I developed an extraordinary appetite. My digestion was excellent and I felt my strength growing. Wonderful Providence! It had taken away my energies to humble me; now it was giving them back because the time for our sentences was fast approaching and it did not want me to succumb at this announcement.

On 24 November one of our companions, Dr. Foresti,[1]

[1] Felice Foresti, another of the band of *Carbonari* arrested in 1819, was 'brought in' by the Austrian police as a result of certain compromising statements made by Antonio Villa (see footnote, p. 168) in the course of his examination by the police in 1818. To save his own skin Foresti betrayed his colleagues. He was, none the less, condemned to death, but the sentence was commuted to one of twenty years hard labour. In 1835 he was pardoned on condition that he emigrated to the United States. He returned to Italy some

was taken from the *Piombi* prisons and carried off to somewhere unknown. The warder, his wife, and the under-warders were all scared out of their wits; none would give me a clue to the mystery.

'What d'you want to know,' Tremerello said to me, 'if there's nothing good to know? I've already told you more than enough, more than enough!'

'Oh, come, what's the use of silence?' I cried with a shudder. 'D'you think I don't know what you mean? He's condemned to death, isn't he?'

'Who? Him? Doctor Foresti?'

Tremerello hesitated; but a longing to gossip was not the least of his good points!

'Well then, don't say that I have a big mouth. I didn't want to open my lips about this. Don't forget you forced me.'

'All right, all right! I forced you. Come on now, tell me everything! What's happened to poor Foresti?'

'Oh, sir, they took him over the Bridge of Sighs.[1] Now he's in the criminals' cells. Sentence of death has been read out to him, and to another two.'

'And will it be carried out? When? Poor men! But who are the other two?'

'That's all I know, all I know! The sentences have not been made public yet. There's a rumour in Venice that several sentences are to be commuted. God grant that none of you are put to death. God grant that if not all of you are spared you will be at least. I have taken such a liking to you, sir, forgive the liberty, as if you were my own brother.'

Deeply moved, he went out. The reader can imagine my

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years later and died at Genoa in 1858. Dr. Foresti wrote and published an autobiography in which he accused several of his fellow-*Carbonari* (among them Pellico) of betraying their colleagues.

[1] Leading over the lagoon to the island of San Michele (see p. 98). Pellico, however, would appear to have made a blunder here since it seems to have been proved that Dr. Foresti was not transferred to San Michele until the spring of the following year.

agitation during all that day and the following night and for many a day after when I could learn nothing more.

This state of uncertainty lasted for a month; finally the sentences passed on those involved in the first trial were made public. They struck at a great number of persons, nine of whom had been condemned to death[1]; by an act of clemency, however, these had their sentences commuted to hard labour, some for twenty and others for fifteen years (and in both cases the sentences had to be served in the fortress of the Spielberg near the town of Brünn in Moravia); some for nine years or less (these were to go to the fortress of Ljubljana).[2]

But, was the fact that the death sentence passed against some of those involved in the first trial been in every case commuted to hard labour a guarantee that those involved in the second trial would also escape death? Was it not more probable that the former had been treated leniently only because they had been arrested before the ban on secret societies had been promulgated, and that on the latter would fall the full rigour of the law?[3]

'That doubt won't take long to resolve,' I told myself. 'God be thanked that I have time to foresee my death and prepare myself for it.'

[1] Not nine but thirteen had been condemned to death. Of these, four had their sentences commuted to twenty years hard labour, three to fifteen years, and the rest to ten or six years.

[2] For an account of the fortress of the Spielberg see Chap. 57, p. 114, and Note 2. Ljubljana (Laibach) was the capital of the kingdom of Illyria from 1816–49. The fortress of Ljubljana was the mediaeval fortress on the Scholssberg, which was again used for political prisoners during the First World War.

[3] The ban on secret societies mentioned in the text was promulgated in August 1820. In virtue of this ban the penalty for anyone provoking or taking part in a political revolution was death; for anyone who did not try to prevent such a revolution the penalty was very hard labour for life; while for those who did not denounce anyone whom they knew to be guilty of high treason it was hard labour for life. Pellico, then, who had been arrested two months after the publication of the ban, could be in no doubt as to his own fate.

48

FIRES BY NIGHT

My one thought was to die like a Christian and with due courage. I was tempted to cheat the gallows by suicide, but the temptation passed. What advantage would it be for a man to turn himself into his own executioner in order to avoid being put to death by the public executioner? He would not save honour, for it is surely childish to imagine it more honourable to play a trick on the public executioner than not to play it, even when he must perforce die. Suicide, I reflected, would still seem to me to be a foolish and empty pleasure even if I were not a Christian.[1]

'If my life is coming to an end,' I told myself, 'am I not lucky that it is doing so in such a way as to leave me time to enter into myself and purify my conscience with sentiments and acts of repentance worthy of a man? In the eyes of the mob, to go to the gallows is the worst of all deaths, but in the eyes of a wise man it is better than so many deaths from illness accompanied by such weakening of the intellect that the soul is quite unable to rise above base thoughts.'

The justice of this reasoning penetrated so deeply into my mind that the horror of death, and of that kind of death in particular, left me completely. As I meditated at length on the Sacraments which were to give me the strength to make that solemn step, I felt ready to receive them with such dispositions as to experience their efficacy.

But, if I had actually been led to my death, would I have kept intact that spirit of noble-mindedness and peace that I

[1] Dr. Foresti tried, in fact, to commit suicide. Returning to his cell after his sentence of death had been read out to him, he smashed a large crystal bottle into small pieces and swallowed them. The authorities, however, managed to save his life. Pellico's reflections on suicide were very likely prompted by Foresti's abortive attempt to cheat the gallows by taking his own life. (See also page 44, and page 139.)

believed was mine? The feeling, also, of indulgent affection for those who hated me, and the joy I felt at being able to sacrifice my life to the will of God? Man, alas, is full of contradictions and when he seems most strong and holy can topple in a second into weakness and sin. God alone knows if in this case I should have died a worthy death. I do not rate myself highly enough to be sure.

In the meantime the fact that death was probably hovering near me so filled my imagination that my own death struck me as not only possible but as if revealed by some infallible presentiment. My heart was no longer open to any hope of avoiding my fate, and at every sound of footsteps or keys, every time my cell door was thrown open, I said to myself: 'Courage now! They may be coming to take me to hear my sentence. Let us listen to it with dignified serenity, and bless the Lord.'

I thought over what I should write for the last time to each member of my family, to my father, my mother, to each of my brothers and sisters; and as I turned over in my mind how to convey my deepest and most sacred affections I felt myself tenderly moved and cried, though my tears did not weaken the resignation of my will.

My insomnia returned, of course, but how different from before! I heard neither groans nor laughter in the cell, no longer raved about ghosts and hidden men. To me night was pleasanter than day, for I then concentrated more on prayer. I used to lie down around four o'clock in the morning and sleep peacefully for two hours or so. On awakening, I stayed in bed late to rest. I got up around eleven.

One night, when I had gone to bed earlier than usual and had been asleep for less than a quarter of an hour, I was startled out of sleep by an intense light on the wall opposite me. I was afraid of having fallen back into the old state of delirium, but what I saw was no illusion. The light was coming from the small narrow window looking north under which I was lying. Jumping out of bed I get hold of the table, set it on the bed, put a chair on it, clamber to the top, and then I

see one of the loveliest and most terrifying sights imaginable: an immense fire a gunshot or so from our cells.

It had taken a hold on the building housing the public ovens, and gutted it.

Gigantic balls of flame and smoke, swirled by a raging wind, stood out all the more brilliantly as the night was pitch-dark. Sparks were flying around in every direction so that the skies seemed to be raining them down. The fire was reflected in the near-by lagoon. A great number of gondolas were coming and going. I imagined the terror and danger of people living in the burning house and the ones nearby, and pitied them all. Distant voices of men and women could be heard calling: 'Tognina!' 'Momolo!' 'Beppo!' 'Zanze!'[1] Even the name of Zanze reached me! There are thousands of Zanzes in Venice; yet I was afraid it might be that one of whom I cherished such tender memories. Suppose the poor girl was really there, surrounded by flames? I longed to be able to hurl myself to her rescue. Palpitating with horror and wonder I clung to that window until dawn; then I clambered down, oppressed by a mortal sadness, imagining much greater damage than was actually the case. Tremerello told me that only the ovens and adjacent store-rooms, containing a great quantity of sacks of flour, had been destroyed.

49

DEATH BY FIRE?

THE sight of that fire was still in my imagination when a few nights later (I had not yet gone to bed but was seated at the table studying and all stiff with cold) came a sound of voices near by; they were those of the warder, his wife, their children, and under-warders too:

[1] Tognina is the diminutive of Antonietta, while the other names mentioned in the text are the diminutives respectively of Girolamo (Jerome), Giuseppe (Joseph), and Angiola (Angela).

'Fire! Fire! Blessed Virgin, we're lost!'

The cold dropped off me; covered now with sweat I leaped to my feet, and looked around for flames. There were none, though the fire was in the building itself, in offices near the cells.

One of the under-warders was calling in Venetian dialect: 'But, *sior paron*, what shall we do with the gentlemen in cages if the fire spreads?'

'I've not the heart to leave 'em to roast,' came the warder's answer. 'But I don't know if we can open the prison doors without the Commission's leave. Run then and ask 'em, that's a good lad!'

'*Vado de botto*, *sior*, but the answer won't get here in time, y'know!'[1]

Where was all that heroic resignation I had been so sure was mine at the thought of death? And why did the thought of burning alive make me feverish? Was it any more pleasant to have a rope tied round my neck than burn to death? Reflecting on this I felt ashamed of my fear and though about to shout for the warder to unlock my cell door, for pity's sake, I controlled myself. But I was afraid.

'So this,' I said to myself, 'is my courage if I'm spared by this fire and led to the gallows! I'll control myself, hide my cowardliness from others, but tremble all the same. Unless, of course. . . . Is it not also courage to behave, when trembling with fear, as if one were not trembling at all? Is it not generosity of heart to force oneself to give willingly what one regrets giving at all? Is it not obedience to obey with repugnance?'

The din going on in the warder's house was so loud that it seemed to point to ever-increasing danger. And the under-warder who had gone off for permission to drag us out of those cells was not back yet. At long last, however, I seem to hear his voice. I listen but cannot make out his words. I wait, hope; in vain. No one comes.

Can they possibly have refused to allow us to be moved away from the fire? What if there is no longer any chance of escape? Suppose the warder and his family are finding it hard

[1] 'I'm off at once, sir.'

enough to save themselves and no one is bothering any more about us poor *gentlemen in cages*?

'Come now!' I went on. 'This is not philosophy, this is not religion. Shouldn't I do better to prepare to see flames coming into my cell to devour me?'

Meanwhile the noises outside were lessening little by little, until I heard nothing more. Was this a sign that the fire had stopped? Or had all those who could taken to flight, and none remained except victims abandoned to a cruel end? When the silence continued I calmed down; the fire must have been put out.

I went to bed and blamed myself like a coward for having been frightened. Now there was no danger of my being burned alive, I was sorry I had not died that way rather than at the hands of men.

Next morning I heard from Tremerello what the fire had been, and laughed at the fright that he told me he'd had, as if my own fright had not been equal to or greater than his.

50

ON THE ISLAND OF SAN MICHELE

On 11 January [1822] at about nine in the morning Tremerello made some excuse to come to my cell. In a state of great agitation he said: 'You know that on the island of San Michele of Murano, not far from Venice, there is a prison with a hundred *Carbonari* or more in it?'

'So you have told me before, several times. Well . . . what are you getting at? Speak up, man! Have some of them been condemned to death?'

'Precisely!'

'Who?'

'I don't know.'

'Is my poor friend Maroncelli there?'

'I don't know, sir, really I don't know who's there.'

With that he went out, looking upset, eyeing me and making gestures of compassion.

Shortly after the warder arrived, accompanied by the under-warders and by a man whom I had never seen before. The warder seemed embarrassed. It was the unknown who broke the silence.

'Sir, the Commission has ordered that you come with me.'

'Let us go then,' I answered. 'And who may you be?'

'I'm the warder of the San Michele prison, where you're to be transferred.'

The warder of the *Piombi* handed the other my money which he was holding in his hands. I asked, and got permission, to give the under-warders some little gift, put my belongings into order, tucked the Bible under my arm, and set out. As we went down those endless steps Tremerello pressed my hand furtively as if to say 'Poor devil! You're for it!'

We went out by a door opening on to the lagoon; there was a gondola there, with two assistants of my new warder in it. I stepped into the boat with mixed feelings; a certain regret at having to leave the *Piombi* where, if I had suffered much, I had also become attached to one or two persons, who had in their turn become attached to me; the pleasure of finding myself in the open air after being shut up such a long time; the pleasure, too, of seeing sky, city, canals, without the ominous frame of a barred window. Then there was a memory of a gay gondola that in happier times had wafted me over that same lagoon, of gondolas, too, on Lake Como, and those on Lake Maggiore, and of skiffs on the Po and the Rhône and the Saône. . . . O vanished laughing years! What man in all the world was happy then as I?

Born of most loving parents in circumstances neither rich nor poor which by being almost equally close to both had made it easy for me to have a true understanding of the two conditions (circumstances which I consider most useful to cultivate the affections), after a childhood made happy by

tender family care I had gone to an aged cousin of my mother's in Lyons, a very rich man and worthy of his wealth. In his house I had spent the first ardent years of my youth, amid the joys of affection and the enchantments of elegance. From Lyons I had returned to Italy and lived with my parents in Milan, where I continued to study and to love society and books, finding only excellent friends and flattering applause. Monti and Foscolo, though mutual enemies, had been equally kind to me. I had become more attached to the latter; and this hot-tempered man, whose brusqueness made so many lose their affection for him, was all gentleness and cordiality towards me, while I on my part felt loving reverence for him. Other prominent men of letters also became attached to me as I did to them. No envy, no calumny ever attacked me, or if it did it came from persons already so discredited that it could do me no harm.[1]

After the fall of the Kingdom of Italy my father had gone back to live in Turin with the rest of the family; I kept on putting off rejoining that dear family of mine, and eventually decided to remain in Milan where I was surrounded by so much happiness that I could not bring myself to give it up. Among the excellent friends I had in Milan three in particular had a special place in my heart, Pietro Borsieri, Mons Lodovico de Breme, and Count Luigi Porro Lambertenghi; and later on Count Federigo Confalonieri.[2] When Count Porro asked me to act as tutor to his two children I became like a father to them, and like a brother to their father. Into his home

[1] When Pellico wrote these words he had already become the target of numerous accusations and calumnies, and these were not all of them 'from persons already so discredited that they could do' him 'no harm'! See the Introduction, p. xix, et seq. on this point.

[2] The Milanese Count Confalonieri, a Liberal and a collaborator of the *Conciliatore*, was arrested in 1821 for his part in a revolution in Lombardy, and condemned to death (see p. 157 and footnote). The sentence was commuted to one of hard labour for life. He was set free, however, in 1836, after spending fifteen years in the Spielberg, but was exiled to the United States. In 1840 he was allowed to return to Milan, where he died six years later. For the story of Confalonieri's arrest, see pp. 195–6.

flowed not only the most cultural life in the city but also many famous travellers. There I met Madame de Staël, Schlegel,[1] Davis,[2] Byron, Hobbhouse, Brougham, and many other illustrious personages from different parts of Europe.

How pleasant and improving is the friendship of men of merit! Yes, I was happy, and would not have changed my lot with a prince's. And from such a pleasant lot I had been flung among hired ruffians, gone from prison to prison, and would end either by being hanged or by wasting away in chains.

51

THE SENTENCE

My head full of such thoughts, I reached San Michele and was locked in a cell looking over a courtyard, the lagoon, and the lovely island of Murano. I asked the warder, his wife, and the four under-warders about Maroncelli; but they paid me brief visits, were full of suspicion, and refused to tell me anything. When, however, you are dealing with five or six persons there is always a chance of finding one ready to take pity on you and speak up. I did find such a person, and this is what I learned.

Maroncelli, after a long period of solitary confinement, had been put in a cell with Count Camillo Laderchi[3] who, however,

[1] Augustus W. Schlegel (1767–1845), German writer and critic. He became tutor to Madame de Staël's children, and travelling companion to the good lady herself.

[2] This seems to be a mistake for (Humphrey) Davy, the famous chemist, who visited Italy several times, once in 1818.

[3] Laderchi was initiated into the *Carbonari* when he was only eighteen. He became a close friend of Maroncelli's and was one of those unlucky enough to be mentioned by name in Maroncelli's famous letter to his brother (see footnote, p. 8). Arrested, and then set free, he was again apprehended by the Austrian police as a valuable witness and handed over to the Commission in Venice. The raw young *Carbonaro* was no match for the Commission. He was thus induced, partly through fear and partly through inexperience, to make certain admissions that spelled disaster for himself

had been released as innocent a few days before, so that Maroncelli was once again alone. Of our companions, Professor Gian Domenico Romagnosi and Count Giovanni Arrivabene had also been released as innocent.[1] Captain Rezia and Signor Canova were together.[2] Professor Ressi lay dying in a cell near theirs.

'Have the sentences arrived then, of those not set free?' I asked. 'Why are they waiting before they tell us what they

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and others, but particularly for his friend and professor of economics at the University of Pavia, Adeodato Ressi. When Ressi was brought face to face with the young Count he was so shocked by the latter's betrayal of him that he refused to defend himself. Laderchi was again set free although the Commission could have proved his guilt with the greatest of ease.

[1] Giovanni Romagnosi (1761–1835), philosopher and jurist, was professor of jurisprudence in Milan, where he was delated by an ex-pupil (Antonio Salvotti, see footnote, p. 103), and arrested in 1821 for his collaboration with the *Conciliatore*, and also because he, too, had been mentioned in Maroncelli's letter. Unlike Count Laderchi, he was more than a match for the subtleties of the Commission, and was perforce released. The authorities, however, deprived him of his chair at the University so that he was soon reduced to poverty, and in poverty he died.

Count Giovanni Arrivabene (1787–1877), agriculturalist and economist, was arrested in 1821 because he had been mentioned by Pellico and Maroncelli in their evidence before the Commission. He, too, knew how to defend himself, and after seven months in prison he was set free. Fearing reprisals he left the country for France and then Belgium. In 1824 the Austrians condemned him to death *in absentia* for having given verbal and financial support to the revolutionists. He returned to Italy in 1848, and in 1860 became a Senator of the Realm.

[2] Giacomo Alfredo Rezia (1786–1856), an artillery officer in the Italian army was arrested in 1821 together with his brother Francesco because they had not denounced Maroncelli, who had tried in vain to induce them to become *Carbonari* (see footnote 3, p. 93). The Captain took all the blame on his own shoulders, and his brother was released, while he himself was sentenced to hard labour for life. The sentence was reduced to three years but he was pardoned before the end of the three years.

Angelo Canova ((1781–1854), a merchant, and later on an actor, from Turin, was initiated into the *Carbonari* by Pellico himself. His sentence of hard labour for life was reduced to one of five years, but after three years in prison he was set free.

are? Is it so that poor Ressi may either die or be in a fit state to hear his sentence?'

'I think so.'

Every day I made inquiries about the unhappy man.

'He has lost the power of speech—he has regained it but raves away and doesn't understand a thing—he gives a few signs of life—he often spits blood and is still raving—he's worse—he's better—he's in his agony.'

Such were the answers that I got for several weeks. Finally one morning I was told, 'He is dead.' I shed a tear for him and consoled myself with the thought that he had not known his sentence.

The following day, 21 February [1822], the warder came for me at ten o'clock in the morning. He led me to the room of the Commission, and retired. The president, the inquisitor, and the two assistant judges, who had all been seated, rose to their feet.[1] Then with a gesture of noble compassion the president informed me that my sentence had arrived, a terrible one indeed but already mitigated by the Emperor.

The inquisitor read the sentence. *Condemned to death.* Then he read the Imperial rescript: sentence commuted to fifteen years hard labour to be served in the fortress of the Spielberg.

'God's will be done!' I replied.

Truly my intention was to receive this terrifying blow like a Christian, and not show or nourish resentment against anybody at all. The president praised my serenity and urged me always to preserve it, assuring me that on this serenity might depend, perhaps, whether after two or three years I should be considered worthy of a greater mercy. (But instead of two or three years it was much longer.) The other judges also spoke kindly and encouragingly to me, but one of them, who in the

[1] The president of the Commission was Count Guglielmo Gardani, a kindly old soul it seems; the inquisitor was Antonio Salvotti, of whom we have already heard (see footnote 1, p. 102), as Professor Romagnosi's law-abiding quondam pupil; the two assistant judges were Stefano Grabmayer and Louis de Roner. A third assistant judge, Giuseppe Tosetti, was absent on 21 February 1822.

course of the trial had always struck me as very hostile, said something, which, though courteous, seemed to me to have a sting to it. The look in his eyes, in which I could have sworn there was an insulting smile of joy, gave the lie to his act of courtesy.[1] Now, I would not swear to this since I may only too possibly have deceived myself. But my blood did boil at that moment and I had great difficulty in not losing my temper. Instead I put up a pretence, so that, even while they were praising me for my Christian patience, I had already lost it in my heart.

'We regret,' said the inquisitor, 'having to make your sentence public tomorrow, but that is a formality which we cannot omit.'

'Very well,' I answered.

'From this moment,' he added, 'you are granted the company of your friend.'

They called the warder and handed me over again, telling him I was to be put with Maroncelli.

52

DESPAIR AGAIN AND DISBELIEF

WONDERFUL indeed for my friend and for me was that moment of reunion after a year and three months of separation and of so much sorrow! The joys of friendship made us almost forget our sentence for a few minutes.

I tore myself from his arms, however, to take up a pen and write to my father, desperately anxious as I was that my family should hear of my fate from me rather than from others, so that the agony of those beloved hearts might be tempered by some word of peace and religion from me. The judges promised me to send the letter off at once.

[1] It is not certain which of the other three members of the Commission Pellico had in mind when he wrote these words. According to some commentators it was Grabmayer, while others think it must have been Salvotti.

After this, Maroncelli told me about his trial and I told him about mine; we exchanged stories of prison adventures, then went to the window and from there greeted another three of our friends who were at their windows. Two of these were Canova and Rezia, who were in the same cell; the former condemned to six years hard labour, the latter to three, while the third was Dr. Cesare Armari,[1] who had been my neighbour during my last months in the *Piombi*. He had not been sentenced and was in fact later declared innocent.

Talking to one or other of them was a pleasant distraction all that day and evening. But when I was in bed with the light out and silence fell, I could not get to sleep, such was the burning of my head and the bleeding of my heart at the thought of my family. Would my aged parents bear up under such a misfortune? Could their other children console them? All of these were as much loved as I was, and worth more; but can a father or a mother ever find in the children left to them a compensation for one they lose?

If only my thoughts could have turned only to relatives and some other person dear to me![2] The memory of these saddened and moved me. But I thought also of the insulting smile of joy that I was sure I had seen in that judge's eyes: of the trial, of the reasons for our sentences, of political passions, of the fate of so many of my friends . . . and I could no longer think of any of my enemies indulgently. God was placing a heavy burden on me! My duty was to carry it with patience. But I could not. I did not want to. The pleasure of hating was more attractive than of forgiving; I spent a night in Hell.

[1] Of Ferrara. He was arrested in 1819 for his *Carbonaro* activities, released in 1821, and expelled from the Austrian States. He went to Paris where he lived and died in great poverty.

[2] This was, very likely, the young and vivacious actress, Teresa Bartolozzi, whom he had met in Milan in 1820. It had been a case of love at first sight as far as he was concerned, but Teresa, a healthy young wench full of the heady wine of life and popularity, was not so impressed by him. At length, however, she consented to marry him out of sheer pity, it seems, but the parents of the love-stricken young man refused to give their permission, much to Teresa's relief (Introduction, p. xv).

Next morning I did not pray. The universe seemed the work of a power opposed to good. Other times in the past I had calumniated God in this way, but I would not have believed it possible to do so again, and that within a few hours! Giuliano at his most frenzied could not have been more impious than I. When a man begins to brood on thoughts of hatred he becomes unjust, even if he was just before. This is especially true if he has been struck down by some very great misfortune, which should turn his mind more to religion. Yes, even if he was just before, for no man can give way to hatred without giving way to pride. And who are you, wretched mortal, to claim the right not to be judged with severity by any of your fellow men? To refuse to believe that any man can injure you in good faith under the impression that he is doing only what is just? To complain if God permits your suffering in one way rather than in another?

I felt unhappy at not being able to pray; but where pride holds sway a man can find no other god but himself. I wanted to recommend my desolate parents to a supreme Helper, but I no longer believed in Him.

53

PUBLICATION OF SENTENCES

At nine o'clock next morning Maroncelli and I were put into a gondola and taken back to the city. We came ashore near the Doge's Palace and went up to the prisons. There they put us in the cell which a few days before had been occupied by Signor Caporali.[1] I do not know where he had been taken.

Nine or ten policemen guarded us as we walked up and down awaiting the moment to be led to the Piazzetta. We had a long wait. Not until midday did the inquisitor appear to warn us that it was time for us to go. Then the doctor came forward

[1] See footnote, p. 82.

and suggested we should drink a small glass of crème de menthe. We took it and felt grateful, not so much for the liqueur as for the deep sympathy that the kind old soul, Doctor Dosmo,[1] was showing us. The leader of the policemen now came forward and put handcuffs on us. Then we followed him, accompanied by the other policemen.

Down the superb Staircase of the Giants we went, remembered the Doge Marino Faliero who was beheaded there,[2] entered the great doors leading from the palace courtyard into the Piazzetta, then turned left towards the lagoon. The wooden platform that we were to stand on was in the middle of the Piazzetta. From there to the Staircase of the Giants were drawn up two files of German soldiers. We passed between them.

On climbing the platform we looked around, and in the faces of the immense crowd below us we saw terror. At various points farther away other armed soldiers had been drawn up. Cannons with matches already burning were everywhere, we were told.

In that Piazzetta, in September 1820, a month before my arrest, a beggar had said to me:

'This is an unlucky place!'

I remembered that beggar now and thought: 'Who knows if he is among these thousands of spectators, and perhaps recognizes me?'

The German captain shouted for us to turn, face the palace and look up. We obeyed and on the loggia above us saw a lawyer of the Curia with a paper in his hands. It was the sentence. He read it out in a loud voice.

There was a deep hush until he came to the words, *Con-*

[1] He was the chief physician of the prisons of Venice.

[2] On 17 April 1355 the then Doge of Venice, Marino Faliero, was decapitated on the steps of the Ducal Palace for plotting to overthrow the State but ostensibly to avenge his wife, who had been insulted by one of the patricians. The Staircase of the Giants of the Ducal Palace mentioned by Pellico (*Scala dei Giganti*, so called because of the two huge statues there of Mars and Neptune by Sansovino) was not the staircase on which Faliero lost his head and his life.

demned to death. Then a universal murmur of compassion rose. A new hush to hear the rest of the sentence. And again that murmur rose at the words, *Condemned to hard labour; Maroncelli for twenty years, Pellico for fifteen years.*

The captain signed for us to get down. We cast a last glance round the Piazzetta and got down. Into the courtyard we went again, climbed the great staircase, returned to the room from which we had been led into the Piazzetta. There our handcuffs were removed, and we were taken back to San Michele.

54

NEWS FROM HOME

THOSE sentenced before us had already set out for Ljubljana or the Spielberg accompanied by a police commissary. Now we were waiting for his return to take us to our fate. This interval lasted a month. My days were spent entirely in talking and listening to others talking, to distract my mind. But Maroncelli also used to read me his literary compositions, and I in turn read him mine. One evening I read my *Ester d'Engaddi* to Canova, Rezia, and Armari from the window of our cell, and the following evening my *Iginia d'Asti*.[1]

But at night-time I raged and wept, sleeping little or not at all. I was longing and yet dreading to know how my parents had received the news of my misfortune.

At last a letter arrived from my father. What was my sorrow to see that the inquisitor had not sent off my last letter at once, as I had so earnestly begged him to do. My unhappy father, still deceiving himself that I would soon be a free man, had one day picked up the Milan gazette and found my sentence

[1] Pellico wrote these two tragedies in prison, as he tells us in Chap. 28, p. 52. They were afterwards produced for the first time in 1832, when *Ester d'Engaddi* was a success, but *Iginia d'Asti*, in the elegant idiom of our times, was a complete flop.

there. He told me this cruel story himself and left me to imagine how his heart had been torn asunder.

Filled though I was with immense pity for him, my mother, and the whole family, I was enraged that my letter had not been sent off promptly. Doubtless there was no malice in the delay, but I chose to look on it as hellish, to see in it a refinement of cruelty, a desire that the calamity which had fallen on me should weigh as heavily as possible on my innocent relatives as well. I felt like pouring out a sea of blood to punish this imagined inhumanity.

Now that I can judge it with a tranquil mind I no longer think this possible. That delay was due, I am sure, only to carelessness.

In this state of fury, I was very upset to hear that my companions were intending to fulfil their Easter Duties[1] before setting out, and felt that I must not join them on account of my utter unwillingness to forgive. Would that I had given this scandal by not joining them!

[1] The term, Easter Duties, is commonly used by Catholics to express the duty they have (*a*) to receive Holy Communion at least once a year, at Easter or thereabouts; and (*b*) to go to Confession at least once a year. Pellico, therefore, made his Easter Duties (as the full expression has it) at least externally by going to Confession, as he says, and receiving Holy Communion before setting out for the journey north.

It seems, however, that he did not have the proper dispositions for receiving these two Sacraments worthily, if, that is, one may judge from his own words: 'Would that I had given them [his companions] scandal by not joining them' [in going to Confession and Communion]. In his MS Pellico had, in fact, written: 'At the end of my unworthy Confession I was on the point of saying to him [the Provost of Murano who heard his confession]: "Father, I have deceived you. I don't deserve to have my sins forgiven." But shame made me dumb. I forced myself to smile and to convince myself that I was an unbeliever.' See p. 144.

55

THE JOURNEY NORTH

EVENTUALLY the Commissary returned from Germany and came to warn us that we would be setting off within two days.

'I have the pleasure,' he added, 'of giving you some consoling news. On my way back from the Spielberg I saw His Majesty the Emperor in Vienna, and he told me that he wishes the days of your sentences to be reckoned not as twenty-four hours but as twelve. The Emperor wishes you to understand by this that your sentences are halved.'

We were never informed officially of this halving of our sentences, but it was not at all likely that the Commissary lied; particularly as he did not give us this news in secret but with the Commission's[1] knowledge.

It gave me no relief. To my mind seven and a half years in chains was not much less horrible than fifteen years. It seemed to me impossible to live so long. I was in very poor health, with great pains in my chest and a cough, so that I thought my lungs were affected. Also I was eating little, and the little I did I could not digest.

Our departure took place during the night of the 24–25 March. We were allowed to embrace our friend Dr. Cesare Armari; then, in order to make it impossible for us to escape, a policeman chained the right hand and the left foot of each

[1] It appeared, however, later on, when Pellico's father tried to remind the Austrian authorities of the promise made to his son, that the Commission had never heard of such a promise. Inquiries were made, and the Commissary, a certain Englebert, was accused of being responsible for having given Pellico and Maroncelli to understand that their sentences would be halved. Englebert, of course, denied that he had ever said any such thing to the two prisoners. Since it is hardly likely that Pellico was lying it seems certain that the Emperor did make him and Maroncelli the promise mentioned in the text but that afterwards, on second thoughts, he decided to let the law take its course.

of us across our bodies. We went down to the gondola and the guards rowed us towards Fusina.

On arrival there we found two coaches waiting. Rezia and Canova climbed into one; Maroncelli and I into the other. The Commissary travelled in the leading coach with two of the prisoners, while an under-commissary travelled in the second coach with the other two. Six or seven police guards, armed with guns and sabres and distributed, some inside the coaches and some on the roofs, completed the convoy.

To be forced by misfortune to leave one's native country is always sad, but to leave it in chains, be led away to live in severe climes, condemned to languish there for years amid gaolers, is an experience so heart-rending that it is impossible to find words even to hint at it. Before we crossed the Alps my native land became more and more dear to me every hour because of the sympathy shown for us by all we met on the way. Since our sentence had been made public a week or two before, we were awaited in every town and village, at every hut scattered along our route. In several places the Commissary and guards had difficulty in dispersing the crowds surrounding us. The kindness shown openly towards us was wonderful.

In Udine we had a moving surprise. On reaching the inn there, the Commissary had the door of the yard locked, and ordered the crowd to be driven off. He then assigned a room to us, telling the waiters to bring supper and prepare beds. In a second three men came in with mattresses on their shoulders. To our astonishment we noticed that only one of them was an inn-servant; while the other two were acquaintances of ours.[1] We pretended to help them put the mattresses down, and furtively touched their hands. Tears welled up in their hearts and ours—how unbearable that we could not give free vent to them in each other's arms.

[1] One of the two was Dario Cappelli, an actor attached to a company (managed by a friend of Pellico's and Maroncelli's, the actress Carlotta Marchionni) which happened to be playing in Udine when the prisoners passed through the town. The other acquaintance was probably another member of the same company.

The Commissary did not notice this moving scene, but I felt that one of the guards had discovered our secret when my dear friend Dario pressed my hand. He was a Venetian, that guard. As he looked Dario and myself in the eyes, he went pale and seemed to hesitate whether he should give the alarm or not; but he said nothing and turned his eyes away in pretence. If he did not guess that those two were our friends, he must at least have thought them to be waiters we knew.

56

FROM UDINE TO LJUBLJANA

NEXT morning when we left Udine it was barely light. Yet that affectionate friend of ours, Dario, was already in the street, wrapped from head to foot in a cloak. He saluted us again and followed us for a long time. We also saw a coach from which somebody was waving a handkerchief, following us for two or three miles. Finally it turned back. We guessed who it was.[1] May God bless all generous souls who are not ashamed to show love for those in disgrace. I esteem them all the more because in the years of my misfortune I knew others, cowards, who denied me and tried to improve their own position by repeating evil about me. But these were few, while the number of those others was not small.

I had deceived myself in thinking that the sympathy we had met with in Italy would cease as soon as we were in an alien land. But the kind-hearted are always compatriots of the unfortunate. When we were on Illyrian or German territory, we heard the same universal cry of *Arme Herren!* (Poor souls!) From time to time our carriages had to stop on the outskirts of some village, before it was decided where we should go for a night's lodging. At such times the inhabitants pressed round us, and we heard words of sympathy that came straight from

[1] The occupants of the carriage were Carlotta Marchionni (see footnote, p. 111) and her young cousin, Teresa Bartolozzi (see footnote 2, p. 105).

the heart. The kindness of those people touched me even more than that of my own countrymen. I was deeply grateful to them all. The pity of our fellow men is very consoling, and to be able to love them very sweet. The pleasure that I derived from all this lessened even my indignation against those whom I considered my enemies.

'Who knows,' I thought to myself, 'that if I were to see their faces from close quarters and they were able to see mine; if I could read their souls and they mine, maybe I should have to admit that there is no wickedness in them, and they that there is none in me. Who knows but that we should not have to feel compassion for one another, and to love one another.'

Only too often men hate one another because they do not know one another. If they were to exchange a word or two they would take each other by the arm trustingly.

We stopped one day in Ljubljana, where Canova and Rezia were taken from us and led into the castle. It is easy to imagine how painful this separation was for all four of us.

The night of our arrival in Ljubljana and the following day we were politely kept company by a man, who told us, if I understood him correctly, that he was a municipal secretary. He was most humane and spoke with feeling and dignity of religion. I felt he must be a priest. In Germany it is the custom for priests to dress exactly like lay people.[1] He had one of those sincere faces that inspire esteem. I was sorry not to be able to make a closer acquaintance with him, and I am sorry now to have stupidly forgotten his name.

How sweet too it would be to know *your* name, young woman, who in a village of Styria followed us through the crowd and then, when our carriage had to stop for a few minutes, saluted us with both hands and then walked away with a handkerchief to your eyes, leaning on the arm of a sad youth who, by his very blond hair, seemed a German, but who had perhaps been in Italy and come to love our unhappy country.

How sweet it would be to know the names of each of you,

[1] Ljubljana is not, of course, in Germany, but for Pellico Germany appears to be wherever German is spoken (see footnote, p. 179).

venerable fathers and mothers of families, who drew near us in different places to ask if our parents were alive, and on hearing that they were went pale and cried: 'Oh, may God restore you to the poor old folk!'

57

THE SPIELBERG

We reached our destination on 10 April.[1]

The city of Brünn, where the governor of the two provinces of Moravia and Silesia resides, is the capital of Moravia. It is situated in a smiling valley and has a certain air of wealth. In those days it had many prosperous textile factories, which have since declined. The population numbered about 30,000 souls.

Near its walls, to the west, rises a hillock bestridden by the ill-fated fortress of the Spielberg, once the palace of the lords of Moravia, now the harshest prison of the Austrian Monarchy.[2] It had been a powerful strongpoint but the French had bombarded and taken it at the time of the famous battle of Auster-

[1] The day was a Wednesday, the hour, 4.30 p.m.

[2] Built in the ninth century the fortress was first known as *Castrum brunense*, and later as *Castrum Spylmberg*, that is, the *Fortress on the Hill of the Games*, in memory, perhaps, of the games that used to be held there on certain feasts. The fortress was turned into a prison after the defeat of Austria at Austerlitz (2 December 1805).

Brünn, or Brno, lies at the confluence of the Svratka and the Svitava, between two hills, of which the Spielberg is the higher, rising to 945 feet above the valley. On the lower hill is the cathedral of St. Peter looking down on the tangle of narrow and crooked streets of the old town. A little more than 100 years after Pellico saw it for the first time Brünn had a population of over 263,000 as compared to its handful of inhabitants (30,000) then. It had also, in the same interval, become the centre of the Czechoslovak cloth and woollen manufactures, while the 'smiling valley' in which the city lies had brought it additional wealth and prosperity in the shape of other industries such as brewing, distilling, milling, sugar-refining, and so on.

litz (the village of Austerlitz is close by). Although not repaired sufficiently to serve as a fortress again, part of the ruined enclosure had been restored. There some 300 convicts, most of them robbers and murderers, were serving sentences, some of 'hard', others of 'very hard' labour.

'Hard' labour means to do forced labour, be chained by the ankle, sleep on bare boards, and eat the poorest imaginable food. 'Very hard' labour means to be even more horribly chained, with an iron ring round the waist and the chain fixed to the wall in such a way that you are close against the boards that serve as a bed, and can hardly walk. The food is the same although the law states: *bread and water.*

As political prisoners we had been condemned to hard labour.

While we made our way up the steep slopes of the hillock we kept on turning our eyes back to say goodbye to the world, uncertain if the abyss that was swallowing us up alive would ever again open its jaws for us. Externally I was calm, but internally raging. In vain did I turn to philosophy for calm; philosophy had no reasons strong enough to offer me. I had left Venice in bad health, and the journey had utterly exhausted me. My head and whole body ached; I was burned up with fever. Physical suffering helped to keep me in a state of anger, and anger probably increased my physical suffering.

We were handed over to the Superintendent of the Spielberg,[1] and he entered our names among those of the common thieves. The Imperial Commissary embraced us before taking his leave.

'What I particularly recommend to you gentlemen,' he told us with emotion, 'is docility. The slightest violation of discipline may be punished by the Superintendent with heavy penalties.'

After being handed over to the Superintendent, Maroncelli

[1] A certain Smarczek, a kind-hearted man, who tried to ease as much as possible the burden of his prisoners. He was, however, very severely rapped over the knuckles for it (see footnote, pp. 159–160).

and I were led down into an underground passage where the doors of two very dark cells, not adjacent, were opened for us. There we were shut up, each in his den.[1]

58

SCHILLER

How bitter it is when you have already said goodbye to so much and are left alone with a friend as unfortunate as yourself, how cruel and bitter it is to separate! Maroncelli left me a sick man, and he mourned for one whom it was unlikely he would ever see again. And in him I mourned a magnificent flower of health plucked perhaps forever from the life-giving light of the sun. Yes, that flower did wither. It did see the light of day again, but in what a state!

When I found myself alone in that dreadful cavern, and heard the bolts of the door shot back, and by a faint glimmer filtering through a slit of a window high in the wall made out a bare plank for my bed, and a huge chain fixed to the wall, I sat down trembling on that bed, grabbed that chain and measured its length, thinking that it was for me.

Half an hour later came the sound of the key in the lock. The door swung open. It was the head warder bringing me a jug of water.

'This,' he said in a hard voice, 'is for drinking. Tomorrow morning I'll bring your loaf of bread.'

'Thank you, good man.'

'I am not good,' he snapped back.

'The worse for you, then,' I said indignantly. 'What about this chain?' I added. 'Is it perhaps meant for me?'

[1] The cells into which Pellico and Maroncelli were thrown were situated on the north-west side, in what had been the ancient moat of the fortress. This side was known as *Giuseppina*, while the south-west side was called *Leopoldina*. The cells were, as a result, dark, damp, and squalid beyond words. Or, as Pellico calls them, 'dens' of wild beasts.

'Yes, sir, if you don't keep quiet, but get angry, or are insolent. But if you're reasonable we only give you a chain round the ankles. The blacksmith is getting it ready.'

He was walking slowly up and down, an enormous but thin man, swinging a nasty looking bunch of heavy keys, while I stared at him angrily. Though the cast of his features was not coarse, everything about him struck me as the hateful expression of brutal severity.

How unjust we are when judging from appearances and according to our own proud prejudices. The man whom I imagined to be merrily jingling his keys to make me feel his dreadful power, the very man whom I thought insolent from long habit of cruelty, was in fact being moved to compassion, and spoke in that harsh tone only to hide this feeling. He would have liked to hide it so as not to appear weak, and lest I might be unworthy of it; but at the same time he was presuming me to be more unfortunate than wicked, and wanted me to see that.

Put out by his presence, and still more by his air of mastery, I thought it opportune to humble him. Imperiously, as if speaking to a servant, I said:

'Give me a drink.'

He looked at me as if to say:

'How arrogant you are! Well, here you must stop giving orders.'

But he was silent; bending his long back he lifted the jug from the floor and handed it to me. As I took it I noticed he was trembling; putting this down to old age, a mixture of pity and respect tempered my pride.

'How old are you?' I asked gently.

'Seventy-four, sir. Many a misery I've seen in my time. Mine, and others.'

This hint of his own and others' misfortunes was accompanied by a new fit of trembling as he took the jug back; I began to wonder if this was the effect not only of age but of some more noble agitation. The doubt destroyed the hatred produced by my first impression of him.

'What's your name?' I asked.

'Fortune, sir, played me a joke by giving me the name of a great man. It's Schiller.'

Then he told me briefly what his country and his origins were, the wars he had seen, and the wounds he had received. He was a Swiss, from a peasant family. He had fought against the Turks under General Laudon[1] at the time of Maria Therèse and Joseph II, then in all the wars of Austria against France up to the fall of Napoleon.

59

SICKNESS

When we form a better opinion of someone whom before we had thought wicked, and begin to study his face, voice, and general behaviour, we seem to find clear signs of goodness. Is this discovery real? I suspect it to be an illusion. Shortly before that same face, that same voice, that same behaviour, seemed clear signs of a rascal. Our judgement of the moral qualities of the person has changed, and so all at once do our conclusions of physiognomical science. How many faces we venerate because we know they belong to decent men, but which we should not consider at all inspiring of veneration if they were the faces of other men! The contrary, of course, is also true. I had to laugh once at a lady who, on seeing a painting of Catiline and mistaking it for one of Collatinus, imagined that she could detect there the sublime sorrow of Collatinus for the death of Lucretia![2] Yet such illusions are common.

Not of course that there are not good people whose faces have the stamp of goodness and rascals whose faces are no less clearly stamped with their rascality; but I maintain that many faces have an expression that is ambiguous.

[1] Baron Ernest de Laudon (1716–90) was a Marshal in the Austrian army.

[2] Lucius Tarquinius Collatinus was the husband of the legendary Lucretia outraged by Sextus Tarquinius.

Anyway, now that this old Schiller had won some of my approval I looked at him more carefully, and no longer found him unpleasant. His speech, in fact, for all its uncouthness, showed signs of his being a kind soul.

'As I'm a corporal,' he told me, 'I got the wretched job of jailer, instead of retirement. And God knows if it doesn't cost me more sorrow than to risk my life in battle.'

I was sorry for ordering him so arrogantly to give me a drink a little before.

'My dear Schiller,' I said, pressing his hand, 'don't try and deny you're a good man. I know that you are, and as I'm in this misfortune I thank Heaven you've been given me as guardian.'

He listened to my words, shook his head, and passing his hand across his brow like a man troubled by his own thoughts said: 'I'm a bad man, sir! They made me take an oath which I will never break. I'm bound to treat all prisoners alike, regardless of their standing; show no indulgence, make no concessions, particularly to political prisoners. The Emperor knows what he's doing. I must obey him.'

'You're a decent fellow and I will respect what you consider as a duty of conscience. The man who acts from a sincere conscience can err, but is sinless before God.'

'My poor sir! Be patient, feel for me. I'll be hard as iron on duty, but my heart . . . my heart is all regret that I can't help those who are in trouble. This is what I want to say.'

We were both moved. He begged me to be quiet, not to get furious as prisoners often do, not to force him to treat me harshly. Then his voice went hard as if to hide some of his pity and he said: 'Now I must go.'

He came back at once, to ask for how long I had had my wretched cough; then cursed the doctor roundly for not coming to see me that very night.

'You've a temperature like a horse, sir,' he added. 'I know a bit about such things. You need at least a palliasse, but we can't give you one until the doctor orders it.'

He went out, locking the door behind him, and I stretched

out on the hard boards. I had a temperature, and a great pain in my chest, yet was less furious, less an enemy of my fellow men, less far from God.

60

NOCTURNAL VISITORS

THAT evening the Superintendent, accompanied by Schiller and another corporal and two soldiers, came and searched my cell. Three searches a day were laid down in the regulations: one in the morning, one in the evening, and one at midnight.[1] The search-party used to look into every corner and examine every minute detail. Then the soldiers went out while the Superintendent (who was never absent, morning or evening) would stay behind to exchange a few words with me.

The first time I saw the little group a strange thought came to me. Ignorant as yet of these bothersome visits, and delirious with fever, I imagined that they were coming towards me to murder me, and grabbed the long chain to smash into the face of the first man to come near.

'What are you doing?' exclaimed the Superintendent. 'We've not come to do you any harm. This is a formal visit to all cells to make sure that things are in order.'

I hesitated; but when I saw Schiller coming towards me holding out his hand in a friendly manner, his fatherly face filled me with trust. I let the chain drop and grasped his hand in both mine.

'Oh, how hot he is,' he said to the Superintendent. 'If only we could give him a straw mattress.'

He said this with an expression of such sincere and affectionate sorrow that I was touched.

The Superintendent took my pulse and expressed his

[1] For some years, however, the cells were searched only twice a day, and then only very perfunctorily. Later on the regulations were tightened up (see footnote, p. 159).

compassion. He was a kindly man but did not dare to take any decision on his own.

'Everything is rigorously prescribed for me too,' he said. 'If I don't carry out to the letter what's laid down I run the risk of being thrown out of my job.'[1]

Schiller pulled a long face, and I could have sworn he was thinking to himself:

'If I were Superintendent I'd not take my fears to that point! Nor could a liberty so justified by need, and so harmless to the Emperor, ever be taken as a great fault.'

When I was again alone my heart, which had for some time been incapable of deep religious sentiment, was touched, and I prayed. It was a prayer for a blessing on Schiller's head, but I added: 'Let me discover in the others, too, some quality which will draw me to them. I accept all the tortures of prison, but let me love my fellow men. Free me from the torture of hating them.'

At midnight I heard the sound of many feet in the passage. The key screeched, the door was thrown open. It was the corporal with two guards to search the cell.

'Where's my friend Schiller?' I asked eagerly. He had stayed out in the passage.

'Here I am!' he answered. 'Here I am!'

He came over to the plank bed and felt my pulse once again, bending down anxiously to look at me, like a father over the bed of a sick child.

'Now that I think of it,' he was growling, 'tomorrow's Thursday. It would have to be Thursday.'

'What do you mean by that?'

'That the doctor doesn't usually come except on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday mornings, so he's not coming tomorrow, worse luck.'

'Don't let that upset you.'

'Not let it upset me, not let it upset me! The whole town is talking of nothing but you gentlemen's arrival; the doctor is

[1] It is most unlikely that the Superintendent actually said so to Pellico, especially in the presence of the corporal and soldiers.

bound to know of it. Why the devil hasn't he made a special effort to pay an extra visit?'

'Might he not come tomorrow, though it is Thursday?'

The old man said no more; but he squeezed my hand so hard that he almost maimed it. Although it hurt I felt pleased like a man in love when his beloved, during a dance, tramples on a toe; he could cry out with the pain of it, but smiles at her instead and considers himself blissfully happy.

61

THE DOCTOR CALLS

On Thursday morning, after a very bad night, weakened, with every bone aching from the boards, I broke into a copious sweat. The first search-visit came. The Superintendent was not present; as that hour was inconvenient for him he used to come round a little later.

I said to Schiller: 'Just feel how I'm bathed in sweat. But it's already drying on my body. I need a change of shirt at once.'

'Not allowed!' he yelled in a brutal tone. But he made me secret signals with his eyes and hand. When the corporal and guards had left he turned round before closing the door and again made me a sign. A little later he re-appeared with one of his own shirts, twice the length of my body.

'For you,' he said. 'It's a bit on the long side, but I've no others here now.'

'Thank you, friend. But as I've brought a trunk full of linen to the Spielberg, I hope they're not going to refuse me the use of my own shirts. Be good enough, then, to ask the Superintendent for one.'

'You're not allowed any of your linen, sir. Every Saturday you're to have a prison shirt like the other prisoners.'

'Honest old soul,' I said to him. 'You see the state I'm in. It is not at all likely I'll ever get out of here alive. So I'll never be able to repay you for anything.'

'Shame on you, sir!' he burst out. 'Shame on you, to speak of payment to one who can do nothing for you! To one who can only lend underhand to a sick man something to dry his sweating body with!'

Then he threw his long shirt rudely over me and went out muttering and banging the door behind him like a man in a rage.

Two hours or so later he brought me a piece of black bread.

'This is your ration for two days,' he said.

And he began pacing up and down fuming.

'What's the matter with you?' I asked. 'Are you angry with me? I did accept the shirt you kindly offered me, you know.'

'I'm angry with the doctor, who might at least condescend to come even if today is Thursday.'

'Patience,' I said.

I said 'patience', but I could find no way to lie patiently on those planks, without even a pillow. Every bone in my body was aching.

At eleven o'clock Schiller came in following a prisoner who was bringing me my dinner. This consisted of the contents of two small pots, one full of a horrible stew, the other of vegetables seasoned with a sauce the stench of which alone made me feel sick. I tried to swallow a few spoonfuls of stew, but could not. Schiller kept on repeating: 'Bear up! Try and get used to this food, or you'll find yourself like others, just nibbling at a piece of bread and dying of weakness.'

Finally, on the Friday morning, Dr. Bayer[1] came. On finding I had a temperature he prescribed a palliasse, and insisted I be removed from that subterranean cell and taken to the floor above. Impossible, there was no room! But on a report going to the Governor of the two provinces of Brünn and Silesia, Count Mitrowsky, resident in Brünn, it was decided that, given the serious nature of my illness, the doctor's orders should be carried out.[2]

[1] Joseph Bayer, the prison doctor, was too kind-hearted for such a position. He was soon relieved of it by the authorities in Vienna (see footnote, p. 172).

[2] The time that elapsed between Dr. Bayer's first visit to Pellico and the Governor's decision that his orders were to be carried out was *eight months.*

The cell they gave me upstairs was reached by a ray or two of light; and by clambering up to the bars of the high slit of a window I could see the valley below, part of the town of Brünn, a suburb with numerous small gardens, a graveyard, the small lake of the Carthusian monastery, and wooded hills separating us from the famous field of Austerlitz.

That view fascinated me. How I should have liked to share it with Maroncelli!

62

PRISON OUTFIT

MEANWHILE our prison garb was being made. Five days later they brought me mine.

It consisted of a pair of trousers of rough cloth, the right leg grey, the left a Capuchin brown; a smock of the same two colours on the same sides, and a jacket similarly coloured but with the colours reversed so that it was brown on the right, and grey on the left. The stockings were made of coarse wool, the shirt of rough hemp full of prickles, a real hairshirt. Round the neck was a small strip of the same material as the shirt. The half-boots, laced, were of untanned hide. The hat was white.

Fetters on our feet, consisting of a chain from one leg to the other, gave the finishing touch to this outfit. While the blacksmith was carrying out the operation of riveting the ends of this chain round my ankles on an anvil by means of bolts through their ends, he said to a guard, thinking that I did not understand German:

'They might have spared him this bit as he's a sick man. It won't be two months before the Angel of Death comes to free him.'

'*Möchte es sein!*' I said to him, clapping him on the shoulder. 'May you be right!' The poor man jumped to his feet in confusion, and said:

'I hope I'm no prophet. I'd like you to be freed by quite a different Angel.'

'Don't you think,' I answered him, 'that a man would welcome even the other one rather than go on living like this?'

He nodded and went off with words of sympathy.

Willingly indeed would I have given up living, but I was not tempted by suicide. I hoped my lungs were already so ruinous as to make short shrift of me. But such was not God's will. The fatigue of the journey had done me much harm; rest restored me somewhat.

A minute after the blacksmith had left I heard his hammer ringing on the anvil below. Schiller was still in my cell.

'Do you hear those blows?' I said. 'I'm sure it's the irons being put on poor Maroncelli.'

As I said this I felt such a vice-like grip at my heart that I staggered and would have fallen but for the good old man's support. For more than half an hour I remained in a state like a faint. I could not speak, my pulse scarcely beat, a cold sweat covered me from head to foot, and yet, despite all this, I could hear every word of Schiller's, and had a most vivid sense of past and present.

Till then all the neighbouring cells had been kept silent by the Superintendent's orders and the guards' vigilance. Three or four times I had heard a voice starting to sing some Italian song but this had at once been stopped by cries from the guards. Of these there were several on the rampart under our windows, and another on duty in our passage was forever listening hard at our doors and peering through the grating in order to prevent noise.

One day towards evening (every time I think of it I thrill with the same emotion as I did then), when the sentinels by some lucky chance were less watchful, I heard from the cell next to mine a song rise and float on the wings of a voice low but clear.

Oh, the joy and the emotion that came over me!

I got up from my palliasse, straining to hear, and when the voice fell silent burst into uncontrollable sobs.

'Who are you, poor wretch?' I cried out. 'Who are you? Tell me your name! I am Silvio Pellico.'

'Oh, Silvio!' cried back my neighbour, 'I don't know you in person, but I have loved you for so long. Come up to the window and let us talk despite these ruffians.'

While I clung to the window he told me his name, and we exchanged a word or two of affection. He was Count Antonio Oroboni, a young man of twenty-nine, from Fratta near Rovigo.[1]

Alas, soon we were interrupted by threatening yells from the sentinels. The one in the passage started to bang away with his gun butt, now at Oroboni's door, now at mine. We did not want to obey; but the guards cursed so much that we stopped after agreeing to start again as soon as the sentinels were changed.

63

A NEW FRIEND

We hoped to be able to hear one another even if we spoke more quietly, and even sometimes to have sympathetic guards who would pretend not to notice our chatter. Such, in fact, turned out to be the case. By dint of experimenting, we evolved a method of speaking so quietly that while our voices were loud enough for our own ears they were too low for those of others, or anyway easily dissimulated. From time to time, though, we had listeners with sharper ears, or else forgot to keep our voices low; then we had to put up with more yelling and banging at our doors, and, what was worse, with the anger of poor Schiller and the Superintendent.

Little by little we perfected all our safeguards: to speak during certain quarters of hours rather than during others,

[1] Young Oroboni was a native of Ferrara, not of Fratta as Pellico says. He was arrested in January 1819 as a *Carbonaro* and condemned to death. The sentence was commuted into one of hard labour for fifteen years.

to speak when such and such guards were on duty rather than when others were about, and always in very low voices. Either because of the perfection of our method, or because of a habit of tolerance gradually forming in others we were able eventually to have long conversations every day, with scarcely a rebuke from any official.

A warm friendship grew up. He told me his life story, and I told him mine; the sorrows and joys of the one became the sorrows and joys of the other. Oh, what comfort we were to one another! How often, after a sleepless night, one or the other went to the window of his cell in the early hours of the morning to greet his friend and hear his beloved voice, and felt his gloom lift and his courage redoubled. The one was convinced that he was useful to the other, and this certainty aroused in us a delightful rivalry of affectionate thoughts, and that sense of satisfaction that a man has even amid misery when he can be of use to his fellow men.

Each conversation left us with a need to go on, to explain. It was a continual life-giving stimulus for our minds, memories, imaginations, and hearts.

At first, the memory of Giuliano made me doubt the constancy of this new friend; I used to think: 'Up to the present we've found agreement. But I could, from day to day, displease him in something. Then he'll send me to the devil.' This suspicion very soon vanished. Our opinions agreed on every essential point but one. He, to a noble soul burning with generosity, undaunted by misfortune, united the frankest and most complete faith in Christianity; while my faith had been wavering for some time, and occasionally seemed quite dead.

He opposed my doubts with just reflections and much affection; I felt that he was right, and told him so, but my doubts kept on returning. This happens to all who do not have the Gospel in their hearts, to all who hate others, or are full of pride in themselves. Their minds see the truth for an instant but since it does not please them the next instant they deny it, and make themselves look elsewhere. Oroboni was very skilful

at turning my attention to the reasons why a man should be ready to forgive his enemies. As soon as I spoke of some person I detested he would take up arms to defend him, and not only with words but with example too. A number of persons had done him harm. He suffered because of them, but forgave them all; and if ever he could tell me something in their praise he did so willingly.

The irritation that had dominated me and made me irreligious from the moment of my condemnation persisted for some weeks; then it stopped altogether. I had fallen under the spell of Oroboni's goodness. In trying to emulate it, I was at least walking in his footsteps. When I was able once again to pray sincerely for all, and no longer to hate any man, my religious doubts were swept away; *Ubi charitas et amor, Deus ibi est.*[1]

64

HUNGER

THOUGH our punishment, it is true, was most severe and designed to irritate, at the same time we had the unusual good fortune that the men we had to deal with were kind-hearted. They could lighten the burden of our state only by behaving in a kindly, respectful way: this all of them did. If there was a touch of roughness in old Schiller it was more than offset by his nobility of heart. Even the wretched convict, Kunda, who brought us our dinner, and water three times a day, wanted to show that he sympathized. He used to sweep out our cells twice a week. One morning, as he swept my cell, he offered me a piece of white bread at a moment when Schiller had moved a few steps from the door. I did not accept, but shook his hand warmly. He was touched by this handshake and said in broken German (he was a Pole):

'Sir, they give you so very little to eat that you must be hungry.'

[1] 'Where charity and love are found there God also is found.'

I assured him that I was not but this was quite impossible for him to believe.

When the doctor had seen that none of us could eat the food they had given us during our first days there he had put us all on the hospital diet known as a *quarter portion*. This consisted of three thin soups every day, a piece of roasted lamb so tiny that it could be swallowed in a mouthful, and about three ounces of white bread. As my health gradually improved my appetite grew, and that *quarter portion* was really too little for me. I tried to go back to the food of the prisoners in good health, but there was no gain in this, for the food was so revolting that I could not eat it. I had no choice, then, but to stick to the *quarter*. So for more than a year I knew what a torture hunger is and some of my companions, more strongly built, and so accustomed to eat more abundantly, suffered even more than I. I know that some of them accepted bread from Schiller and the other warders guarding us, and even from that good soul Kunda.[1]

One day the barber, a young man who acted as an assistant to our surgeon, said to me:

'It's said in town that you gentlemen are being given very little to eat.'

'It's quite true,' I answered frankly.

The following Saturday (he came every Saturday) he tried to give me underhand a big white loaf. Schiller pretended he had not seen the gift. I, if I had given ear to my stomach, would have accepted. But I steadfastly refused lest that poor young man might be tempted to repeat his

[1] Maroncelli tells us in his *Addizioni* (which he wrote as a supplement and a corrective to Pellico's memoirs; see footnote, p. 188) that one day the convict Kunda brought Antonio Villa (see footnote, p. 168, and p. 169), nicknamed *The Elephant* by his fellow-prisoners because of his enormous stature, a loaf of black bread as big as a cart-wheel. As Villa took the loaf Kunda said to him: 'Keep it hidden under your blanket. It will help to satisfy your hunger during the whole week. When it's finished I'll bring you another.'

Villa, however, was so hungry that he finished this colossal loaf in less than two hours!

gift; which would have proved in the long run a burden to him.

For the same reason I refused Schiller's offerings. Several times he brought me a piece of boiled meat and begged me to eat it, protesting that it had cost him nothing, that it was the remains of his dinner and he did not know what to do with it, that he would certainly give it to someone else if I did not take it. I could have flung myself on it and devoured it, but if I took it would he not want to give me something every day?

Twice only when he brought me a plateful of cherries and another time some pears, was I irresistibly drawn by the sight of the fruit. I was sorry for having accepted it, because from that day he never stopped offering me fruit.[1]

65

A BREATH OF FRESH AIR

In early days there it was arranged for each of us to have an hour's walk in the open twice a week.[2] This relaxation was afterwards granted on alternate days; then, later on, every day except feast-days.

We were each taken out walking separately between two guards with guns on their shoulders. As I happened to be in a cell at the end of the corridor I had to pass, as I went out,

[1] The cherries were really a gift from Maroncelli who, in turn, had received them from one of the guards, Kral (see p. 132 and footnote). Maroncelli refused to touch them until Schiller should agree to take half of them to Pellico. Schiller agreed to do so, but for reasons of prudence he took the cherries to Pellico as if they came from himself. Maroncelli gives an ecstatic description of his own reactions on eating his share of the fruit. 'I thought,' he says, 'that I was in Italy. The gloomy walls of my dungeon vanished, or rather they seemed to smile at me, to become luminous. I was no longer in irons. I was walking under the fig-trees and through the orange-groves of Naples where I had passed the happiest years of my youth!'

Pellico's reactions may be gauged from what he says in the text: 'I was irresistibly drawn by the sight of the fruit.'

[2] This was from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. But see p. 177.

the cells of every Italian political prisoner except Maroncelli, the only one who was languishing below.

'Have a pleasant walk!' they would all whisper through the grilles of their doors; but I was not allowed to stop and greet any of them.

We went down a staircase, crossed a wide courtyard, and came out on to a rampart facing south, from where could be seen the town of Brünn and a wide sweep of surrounding countryside. In the courtyard there were always a number of ordinary prisoners going to or coming from work, or walking about in groups chatting. Among them were some Italian thieves who used to greet me with great respect and say to each other: 'He's not a rogue like us, but his penalty is heavier.' In fact they had more freedom than I.

These and other expressions of sympathy I heard as I passed, and warmly returned their greetings. Once one of them said to me:

'Sir, your greeting does me good. You may see in my face something that's not really evil. An unhappy passion drove me to commit a crime. But, sir, I'm not evil, no, I'm not evil!'

And he burst into tears. I offered him my hand, but he was unable to take it. My guards, not from cruelty but because of their instructions, drove him off. They were forbidden to allow anyone at all to come near me. Whenever they wanted to direct remarks to me these prisoners had to pretend for the most part to be speaking among themselves, and if my guards became aware that their words were meant for me they ordered silence.

Through that courtyard would also pass men of various callings, not connected with the prison, and on their way to see the Superintendent, or the chaplain, sergeant, or one of the corporals.

'Here's one of the Italians!' they would whisper. Often as they stopped to look at me I overheard them saying in German, which they thought I did not understand: 'That poor gentleman will never see old age! He has death on his face!'

My health had, in fact, improved at first, but I was again

wasting away from insufficient nourishment and frequent bouts of fever. Only with great difficulty could I drag my chain to the place for our walk, and once there I would throw myself on the grass where I generally stayed until my hour was up.

The guards would stand or sit down by me and chat. One, a Bohemian named Kral, who came from a poor family of peasants, had a certain amount of schooling which he was improving for himself as much as he could by reflecting and commenting keenly on world affairs, and by reading every book that happened to fall into his hands. He was familiar with the works of Klopstock, Wieland, Goethe, Schiller, and many other good German writers. Many bits of their works he knew by heart and used to recite them to me with feeling and understanding.

The other guard, a Pole named Kubitsky, was ignorant but respectful and friendly. The company of these two was very dear to me.[1]

66

THE SUPERINTENDENT'S WIFE

At one end of the rampart were the Superintendent's apartments; at the other lived a corporal with his wife and baby boy. Whenever I saw anyone come out of these dwellings I would get up and go forward towards the person or persons who had come out, and find myself overwhelmed with their kindness and compassion.

The Superintendent's wife had been ill for a long time and was slowly wasting away. Sometimes she had herself carried out into the open air on a settee. Words cannot express how

[1] Of these two guards, Ernest Kral and Kubitzky (or Kupitzky), Maroncelli writes that they were honest men who never betrayed their duty but who, at the same time, carried it out with great mildness and with every show of sympathy.

deeply she moved me when speaking of her compassion for each of us. She had a very gentle, shy look which, despite her shyness, she would sometimes fix with an intense questioning self-confidence on those who spoke to her.

'D'you know, madam,' I said to her once, laughingly, 'that you're rather like someone who was dear to me?'

She blushed and answered with an earnest but attractive simplicity. 'So you'll not forget me, when I'm dead. Pray for my poor soul, and for the little children I'll be leaving behind.'

From that day she was no longer able to rise from her bed. I never saw her again. She lingered on for several months and then died.

She had three little boys, lovely as cupids, and another still at the breast. The poor woman used often to press them to her heart in my presence, sobbing: 'What sort of woman will become their mother after I've gone? Whoever she may be, may God give her a mother's heart towards these children also, though she did not bear them!'

Often I have remembered her prayer and those tears. Sometimes, when she was no more, I would hug her children and, moved, repeat her prayer. I would think of my own mother and of the passionate prayers that were, I doubted not, rising from her loving heart for me, and exclaim amid my tears: 'Oh, how much happier is a mother who dies and leaves children still young behind her, than one who sees those that she has brought up with infinite care snatched from her!'

Two kindly old ladies looked after those children: one the Superintendent's mother, the other an aunt. They wanted to know all my story and I gave them an abridged version.

'We're so very sorry,' they kept on saying with looks of genuine regret, 'that we can't be of any help! But you may be sure we'll pray for you, and that if you're pardoned some day it will be a great day for our whole family.'

The first of these two ladies, the one whom I saw more frequently, had a gentle, unusual eloquence in her consolation; I would listen with filial gratitude and her words stayed in my heart.

She would say things of which I was already aware but which now struck me as new.

'Misfortune does not degrade a man if he is not worthless but ennobles him. . . . If we could enter into God's judgements we would see that many times victors are more to be pitied than vanquished, the exultant than the sad, the rich more than those with nothing. . . . The special love shown by the Man-God for those in misfortune is clear. . . . We must glory in the Cross since it was carried by divine shoulders.'

Soon these two kindly old creatures whom I so enjoyed seeing had to leave the Spielberg for family reasons; the children also stopped coming on to the rampart. How I felt the loss!

67

SCHILLER AGAIN

THE discomfort of the chain at my feet was preventing me from sleeping and so helping to ruin my health. Schiller wanted me to complain, declaring that it was the doctor's duty to have the chain removed. For a time I refused to listen to him, then gave way to his advice and asked the doctor to have me set free from my chains, at least for some days so that I might get the benefit of sleep again. The doctor said that my bouts of fever were not serious enough yet for him to grant my request, and that I must get used to the fetters.

The answer angered me and I was put out at having made such a useless request.

'This is what I get for following your persistent advice!' I said to Schiller.

I must have said this to him very rudely; the rough but good man took offence.

'You're annoyed,' he shouted, 'to have laid yourself open to a refusal, but I'm annoyed at your proud ways with me!'

Then he went on to a long sermon on how the proud make greatness consist in not laying themselves open to refusals, in

not accepting gifts, in being ashamed about a thousand and one trifles. *Alle eseleyen!* All inanities. Shadows of greatness! Ignorance of true dignity! True dignity consists very largely in feeling shame only for evil deeds!

Having said this he went out, making a fiendish row with his keys.

I was left thunderstruck. 'Yet I like that rough frankness,' I said to myself. 'It comes from the heart, like the things he offers, like his advice, or his sympathy. Anyway, isn't what he has just preached quite true? How many weaknesses don't I honour with the name of dignity, when they're really only pride?'

At dinner-time Schiller let the convict Kunda bring in the pots and water while he stayed at the door. I called out to him.

'I've no time!' he snapped back.

I got down from my plank, went over to him and said: 'If you want this food to do me any good don't pull that ugly face at me!'

'Oh, and what face d'you want me to pull?' he asked, calming down.

'A happy man's,' I answered, 'a friend's.'

'Long live happiness, then!' he exclaimed. 'And if you want to see me dance so your food does you good, here I am, at your service!'

With that he started to dance about so amusingly on his long spindly legs that I was doubled up with laughter. But, despite my laughter, I was deeply moved.

68

THE HEART OF SCHILLER

One evening, Oroboni and I were at our windows, and complaining mutually of being famished. We happened to raise our voices slightly, and the guards shouted at us. Unluckily the Superintendent, who was passing that way just then felt he

had to send for Schiller and reprove him severely for not watching more strictly to keep us in silence.

Schiller came to complain about it to me in a state of great fury and ordered me never again to speak from my window. He wanted me to promise it.

'No,' I replied. 'I will not promise.'

'Oh, *der Teufel!*' he cried out, '*der Teufel!* You say that to me: *I will not!* To me who has just had a cursing because of you?'

'I'm sorry, my dear Schiller, for the cursing. Truly sorry. But I should not make a promise which I feel I can't keep.'

'Why shouldn't you keep it?'

'Because I couldn't! Because constant solitude is such a cruel torture for me that I'll never resist the need to produce some sound from my lungs, and ask my neighbour for an answer. And even if my neighbour were silent I'd address my words to the bars on my window, to the hills over there, to the birds flying past.'

'*Der Teufel!* So you won't promise?'

He threw the noisy bunch of keys on the floor and repeated: '*Der Teufel! Der Teufel!*'

Then he threw his arms around me and burst out:

'Very well then, must I cease being a man because of those filthy keys? You're a real gentleman, sir, and I'm pleased that you refuse to make a promise that you can't keep. I'd do the same myself.'

I picked up the keys and handed them to him.

'These keys,' I said, 'are not so dirty as all that since they can't turn an honest corporal like you into a rascal.'

'If they could do that,' he replied, 'I'd take them to my superiors and say: If you refuse me any bread but an executioner's I'll go out and beg for it.'

He pulled out a handkerchief and wiped his eyes, after which he raised his eyes and joined his hands in prayer. I joined my hands and prayed like him in silence. He knew I was praying for him even as I knew that he was for me.

As he turned to go he said in a low voice:

'When you speak to Count Oroboni, speak as quietly as you

can. So you'll do two good turns: one sparing me the reprimands of the Superintendent, and the other making sure that there is no chance of anyone overhearing words of yours, words—need I say?—which, if reported, might irritate more and more those who have power to punish you.'

I assured him that no word ever came from our lips which even reported to anyone could give cause for offence.

We did not, in fact, need to be warned to be cautious. Two prisoners who manage to communicate with one another are quite able to invent their own brand of slang in order to express all they want to express without being understood by anyone who overhears them.

69

OROBONI'S SICKNESS

One morning, on 7 August, as I was returning from my exercise I noticed that the door of Oroboni's cell was open. Schiller, who was inside the cell, had not heard me coming. My guards tried to get in front of me and close the door. I anticipated this and rushed in and flung myself into Oroboni's arms.

Schiller was so surprised that all he could say was '*Der Teufel! Der Teufel!*' He raised his finger to threaten me. But tears rushed to his eyes and he cried out sobbing:

'Oh God, have pity on these two poor young men, and on me, and on all who are unhappy, You who were so unhappy on earth Yourself!'

The two guards were also crying. So was the sentinel on duty in the corridor who had rushed in.[1] Oroboni kept saying to me:

'Silvio, Silvio, this is one of the happiest days of my life!'

As for myself, I do not know what I said, so beside myself was I with joy and tenderness.

[1] Fellico has been accused of exaggerating this incident.

When finally Schiller entreated us to separate and we had perforce to obey, Oroboni burst into a torrent of tears and said:

'Shall we ever see one another again on earth?'

I never did see him again. Some months later his cell was empty and Oroboni was lying in the graveyard beneath the window of my cell.

From that moment when we saw one another we seemed more tenderly, more deeply devoted than before, and our mutual need for one another appeared greater. He was a handsome man, young in years and of noble bearing, but pallid and in wretched health although his eyes were full of life. My affection for him was deepened by the pity aroused in me by his thinness and pallor. He felt the same for me. We both sensed that very likely one of us was soon fated to survive the other. A few days later he fell ill. All I could do was to lament and pray for him. But after some bouts of fever he regained a little strength and we were able to take up our friendly talks. How consoling it was to hear the sound of his voice again!

'Don't deceive yourself,' he told me. 'It will be only for a short time. Try and prepare yourself to lose me. Help me to be brave by being brave yourself.'

Just about this time it was decided to whitewash the walls of our cells and we were moved, meanwhile, into the underground cells. Unfortunately during this interval we were not put into adjacent cells. Schiller used to assure me that Oroboni was keeping well but I was afraid he did not want to tell me the truth, and that Oroboni's health, already so weak, would deteriorate in those subterranean cells. If only at this juncture I had at least had the luck to be near my friend Maroncelli! But I heard his voice, for by singing to one another we were able to exchange greetings despite the shouts of guards.

About this time the chief doctor of Brünn came to see us, sent perhaps because of the Superintendent's reports to Vienna on the state of extreme weakness to which we had all been reduced by the scarcity of food, or maybe by an epidemic of

scurvy which was then raging in the prison.[1] Not knowing the reason for this visit I began to imagine that it was because Oroboni had fallen ill again. The fear of losing him filled me with indescribable restlessness. I was seized with deep gloom and a desire to die. The thought of suicide returned. I fought it, but was like an exhausted traveller who, while he is telling himself, 'It is my duty to go on to the very end', feels an overpowering need to fling himself down and rest.

A short time before, I had been told, an old man of Bohemia had killed himself in one of those dark dens by breaking open his head on its walls. I could not drive from my mind a temptation to imitate him. My delirium might have carried me to this point—who can tell?—had a sudden spitting of blood not made me think my end was near. I thanked God for wanting to kill me Himself in this way and thus save me from an act of despair that my mind condemned.

But God wanted to keep me alive. That spitting of blood lightened my sufferings. In the meantime I was moved back to my cell above, and the increase of light and nearness to Oroboni once more reconciled me to living.

70

A CONFIDENCE BETRAYED

I CONFIDED to him the overpowering melancholy that I had felt away from him; he told me that he too had had to fight the thought of suicide.

'Let's take advantage,' he would say, 'of the short time we've again been given to console one another by religion. Let's speak of God. Let's spur each other on to love Him. Let's remember that He is Justice, Wisdom, Goodness, Beauty, in fact every most perfect thing that we are forever longing for. I tell you that my death is not far off. I will be grateful to you

[1] Not surprisingly, scurvy seems to have been a frequent visitor to the Spielberg cells. Pellico mentions it again in Chap. 89, p. 176.

forever if you will help me to be, during these last days of my life, as religiously minded as I should have been all my life.'

Now we spoke of nothing else but of Christian philosophy, comparing it with the poverty of that of the Sensualists.[1] Both of us were elated to discover such conformity between Christianity and reason; both saw clearly that in contrast with the various Evangelical communions Catholicism alone could really withstand criticism because its teaching consisted not of poverty-stricken additions born of the ignorance of men but of most pure dogmas and of most pure morals.

'If then by some little-to-be-hoped-for chance we return to society,' Oroboni said to me, 'would we be so mean-spirited as not to bear witness to the Gospel? Or be silenced by someone suggesting that prison has weakened our minds, and sheer imbecility made our faith firmer?'

'My dear Oroboni,' I said, 'your question reveals your answer, which is also mine. It takes the worst of cowards to be a slave of other opinions, which we're convinced are false. I don't believe either you or I can be such cowards.'

In the course of these outpourings of ours I did something very wrong: I had sworn to Giuliano never to confide to anyone his real name and what had passed between us. Now I told Oroboni all about it, adding:

'In the world outside not a word of this would ever escape my lips; but here we're in the grave, and I know that even if you were to get out I can trust you.'

Being a very sincere man he was silent.

'Why don't you reply?' I asked. Then he began to upbraid me earnestly for violating a secret. His reproof was just. No friendship, however intimate, however safeguarded by virtue, can justify such a violation.

[1] The materialistic philosophy of Condillac, Tracy, and others (see footnote, p. 38) according to which all our ideas and all our mental faculties and operations are simply and solely sensations. It is the Empiricism of Locke, according to whom all human knowledge springs from sensation *and* reflection, carried a step further: human knowledge springs from sensation *alone*.

But now I had committed this fault Oroboni turned it to advantage. He had met Giuliano and knew honourable features of his life. He told me these and said:

'That man has so often behaved like a Christian that surely he can't carry his anti-religious frenzy to the grave. Let's hope not, let's hope not. As for you, Silvio, be sure to forgive him his ill humours from your heart, and pray for him.'

These words were sacred for me.

71

LIFE IN THE CELLS OF THE SPIELBERG

THOSE conversations of mine, now with Oroboni, now with Schiller or others, took up only a very small part of the long twenty-four hours of my days, and quite often no conversation was possible with Oroboni. How, then, did I occupy myself amid such loneliness? Well, then, here is my whole life during those days.

I always rose at dawn; then, standing on the end of the wooden bed and clinging to the window bars I said my prayers. Oroboni would be at his own window already, or soon came to it. We would greet each other; then in silence turn our thoughts back to God. The scene outside was as beautiful to us as our cells were horrible. That sky, that countryside, those young people moving in a distant valley, the voices of peasant girls, their laughter and songs, would uplift us, make us feel more dearly the presence of Him who is so magnificent in His goodness, and of Whom we had such need.

Then came the morning inspection. The guards would cast a glance round the cell to see if all was in order, and go over my chain link by link to make sure that it had not been accidentally or deliberately broken; or rather (since such a chain was impossible to break) they did this inspection in strict obedience

to prison regulations. If it was a day for the doctor to come Schiller would ask if anyone wished to speak to him, and note down our names.

When the round of inspection was over, Schiller would return with Kunda whose duty it was to clean each cell.[1] Then a short interval, and breakfast was brought. This consisted of a small pot of reddish brew with three small and very thin slices of bread in it; I ate the bread but left the brew.

After this I settled down to study. Maroncelli had brought many books from Italy, and so had all our companions; some more, some less. Together they formed a good little library. We also hoped to be able to add to it by buying books with our own money. No answer had yet arrived to our request to the Emperor for permission to read the books we had and acquire some more; but the Governor of Brünn had provisionally allowed us each two books which we could change any time we wanted.[2]

About nine o'clock the Superintendent would come round accompanied by the doctor if anyone had asked to see him. From then till eleven o'clock, the hour of dinner, I had another interval for study. There were no more visits after dinner, so once again I turned to my studies until sunset when Schiller and Kunda came with fresh water, to be followed in a few seconds by the Superintendent with some guards to carry out the evening inspection in my cell and on my chain.

Exercise time depended on the pleasure of our guards, and was sometimes before, sometimes after dinner.

[1] It might appear from this that the cells were swept and cleaned out *every* day. Pellico, however, has already said that Kunda swept the cells *twice a week* (p. 128). It is probable that Kunda swept out and cleaned only a certain number of the cells every day, so that at the end of the week every cell had been done *twice*.

[2] The 'good little library' mentioned by Pellico contained among other books the works of Dante, Petrarch, Ariosto, Pascal, Corneille, Racine, Schiller, Goethe, Shakespeare, Milton, Byron, and Scott. Among the ancients it had Sallust, Virgil, Horace, Tacitus. Pellico and Maroncelli, as we learn from the official documents had a private library of 72 works in 155 volumes. The librarian for the political prisoners was Kral. (But see p. 159.)

When the evening inspection was over, Oroboni and I would begin our conversation, usually the longest of the day. Others took place in the morning or immediately after dinner, but were usually very short. Sometimes the guards pitied us so much that they said:

'A bit more quietly, sirs, or the punishment will fall on us!'

Other times they would pretend not to notice we were talking, then on catching sight of the sergeant ask us to keep quiet until he had passed; and as soon as he vanished they said:

'You can talk now, sirs; but as quietly as possible!'

At times some of those soldiers became so daring as to join in our conversation, answering our questions and giving us scraps of news about Italy.

To some subjects of theirs our only answer was to ask them to stop. It was natural for us to doubt whether what they said all came from honest hearts or were merely traps to find out what was in our minds. I feel, none the less, inclined to believe that those men were sincere in what they said.

72

THE VOICE OF MARONCELLI

One evening when some very lenient guards were on duty, Oroboni and I did not bother to keep our voices low. In a cell below us where he was clinging to his window bars Maroncelli heard us and made out my voice. He could not restrain himself; and greeted me by singing. After asking how I was, in warm terms he told me how sorry he was not to have obtained permission yet for us to be put together. I had asked for this same favour myself, but neither the Superintendent of the Spielberg nor the Governor of Brünn had the power to grant it. Our common wishes had been made known to the Emperor, but so far there had been no answer to our request.

Several times before, ever since that day when we greeted each other from our cells below by singing, I had heard, from

my cell upstairs, Maroncelli's voice raised in song but without making out the words, and only for a few seconds since he was not allowed to continue.

This time his voice was much louder nor was he interrupted so soon, so I understood all. I cannot find words to express my emotion. I answered, and we kept up our dialogue for nearly a quarter of an hour. Eventually the sentinels on the ramparts changed, and the new guards were not so accommodating. As we were trying to get our singing going once more they swore at us with loud angry voices, which we thought it best to heed.

In imagination I could see Maroncelli languishing for so long now in a cell much worse than mine, could sense the sadness that must often oppress him there, as well as the harm to his health, and was overwhelmed by deep anguish. Eventually I was able to weep but my tears did me no good. A splitting headache came on, with a high temperature. I could no longer stand up and flung myself on the mattress. The convulsions got worse; my chest was torn by horrible spasms. That night I felt I should die.

Next day my temperature dropped and my chest felt better, but I felt as if my brain were on fire, and could scarcely move my head without arousing agonizing pains.

I told Oroboni how I was. He too was worse than usual.

'My friend,' he said, 'the day is not far off when one of us will no longer be able to come to the window of his cell. Every time we greet each other may be the last. Let each of us, then, be prepared both for death and for surviving his friend.'

His voice was full of affection; I could not answer him. We were silent a moment, then he went on:

'How lucky you are to know German! At least you can go to Confession. I've asked for a priest who knows Italian, they tell me there's none here. But God sees my longing, and since I went to Confession in Venice it seems to me there's nothing on my conscience any more.'

'I went to Confession in Venice,' I said, 'with a heart full of resentment, and so did worse than if I'd refused the Sacraments. But if they were to let me see a priest now I assure you that I'd

make my confession to him from my heart, forgiving all my enemies.'

'Bless you!' he exclaimed, 'that's a great joy you've given me. Let us, yes, let us both do everything possible to be united in happiness forever, as we are in misfortune now.'

Next day when I waited for him at the window he did not come. Schiller told me that he was seriously ill. Eight or ten days later he was better and greeted me once more. So several months went by, good days alternating with bad for him no less than for me. I complained but he encouraged.

73

CONFESSION

I MANAGED to hold out until 11 January 1823. That morning I got up with a slight headache but with a feeling of faintness. My legs were trembling and I had difficulty in breathing.

Oroboni too had been ill for two or three days, and was not getting up.

When they brought me the soup for breakfast I had hardly tasted a spoonful before I fainted. Some time later the sentinel in the corridor happened to glance through my grating, saw me lying on the floor with the pot overturned at my side, thought I was dead and called Schiller. The Superintendent came too; the doctor was sent for, and I was put to bed. It was with great difficulty that I was brought back to my senses. The doctor said I was dangerously ill, and had my irons removed.[1] He ordered me some cordial or other, but my stomach could keep nothing down. The headache was becoming unbearable.

The Governor was at once told, and sent off a courier to Vienna to inquire how I was to be treated. He was instructed not to put me in the infirmary but to see that I was tended in my cell with the same care as if I were in the infirmary. Also

[1] They were put on him again three years later, in 1826, but the following year they were removed once more because of his extreme weakness.

the Superintendent was given permission to provide broths and soups for me from his own kitchen for as long as my illness lasted. This permission was of no use to me at first; I could digest no food, solid or liquid. I grew worse and for a week was delirious day and night. Kral and Kubitzky had been assigned to me as nurses; both tended me with real care. Every time that I came to my senses for a little while Kral would repeat:

'Trust in God! God alone is good!'

'Pray for me,' I would reply, 'not that I may recover, but that I may accept my misfortunes and my death in expiation for my sins.'

He suggested I should ask for the Last Sacraments.[1]

'If I have not asked for them already,' I said to him, 'put it down to my weakness of mind. It will be a great comfort for me to receive them.'

Kral reported my words to the Superintendent, and the prison-chaplain was sent for.

I made my confession to him, received Holy Communion, and was anointed. This priest was called Sturm; he gave me satisfaction. His observations on the justice of God and the injustice of men, on the duty to forgive our enemies, on the vanity of all worldly things, were not commonplace. They bore the stamp of a superior and cultured mind and of a warm sentiment of true love for God and his fellow men.

[1] The Last Sacraments, as they are commonly called, of the Catholic Church are the Sacraments of Penance (Confession), Holy Communion (known then as Viaticum), and Extreme Unction, or the *Last Anointing* of the organs of the five senses.

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REUNITED

THE effort of attention I made when receiving the Sacraments seemed to drain away all my energies, yet proved in fact to be beneficial for it caused a state of lethargy for several hours that refreshed me.

I awoke in somewhat better spirits, and seeing Schiller and Kral near me I took hold of their hands, and thanked them for their care. Schiller said:

'I've a trained eye with sick people. I'll bet you won't die.'

'Don't you think that's a bad prognosis you're making?' I said.

'No,' he replied, 'the miseries of life are great, it's true; but the man who bears them decently and humbly always gains by living.'

Then he added, 'If you recover, I hope you'll have a great joy in a few days' time. Haven't you asked to see Signor Maroncelli?'

'I've asked so often, but in vain! I daren't hope for it any more.'

'Go on hoping, sir, go on hoping! And ask again.'

I did ask again, that same day. The Superintendent also said that I must go on hoping, adding that probably Maroncelli would not only be allowed to see me but might also be told to nurse me, and afterwards allowed to remain as an inseparable companion.

Since the health of nearly all the political prisoners had broken down the Governor had asked the authorities in Vienna if we might not all be assigned two by two to a cell, so that the one might help the other. I had also asked for the privilege of writing a last farewell letter to my family. But towards the end of the second week my illness reached a crisis and the danger was over. I was beginning to get up when one morning the door opened and I saw the Superintendent, Schiller, and

the doctor come in smiling. The Superintendent hurried over to me and said:

'We have received permission for you to have Maroncelli as a companion and to write a letter to your parents.'

Joy took away my breath. I fainted, and the poor Superintendent, who had failed in prudence only through impulsive goodness of heart, thought I was dead. When I came to my senses and remembered what he had told me I begged him not to deprive me for a moment longer of such happiness. The doctor agreed, and Maroncelli was brought to my arms.

What a moment that was!

'You, still alive?' we exclaimed to one another. 'Oh, my friend! Oh, my brother! What a happy day to see each other again! May God be blessed for it!'

Yet with our joy, immense as it was, went an immense compassion. Maroncelli, knowing as he did of the serious illness I had been through, was probably less horrified to find me so wasted than I was to see him so changed. For though I had often thought of what he was suffering I had never imagined he would be so different from before. He was hardly recognizable. Suffering, hunger, the foul air of his tenebrous cell had played havoc with that once handsome and ruddy face.

Yet to see each other, listen to each other, be together inseparably at last was a comfort. How many things we had to tell one another, to recall, to repeat! How sweet our mutual compassion! How deep the harmony of all our thoughts! What happiness to find ourselves agreeing in matters of religion, and in a common hatred of ignorance and cruelty, in not hating any man, but pitying the ignorant and cruel, and praying for them.

75

WRITING HOME

I WAS brought a sheet of paper with pen and ink so as to write to my parents. Since permission to do this had been granted me as a dying man anxious to bid a last farewell to his family, I was afraid that my letter, its drift being now quite different, would no longer be sent off. I limited myself to asking in most affectionate words my parents, brothers, and sisters to resign themselves to my fate, as I myself, so I assured them, was resigned.

This letter was none the less sent off, as I learned many years later when I saw my father's house again.[1] It was the only letter that in all the long years of my imprisonment my beloved parents were to receive from me. I never had a single one from them—all they wrote me were held in Vienna. My companions in misfortune were all equally without any contact with their families.[2]

Numberless times we asked for the favour of paper, pens, and ink so that we might at least be able to study; as well as for permission to buy books with our money; neither was ever granted, though the Governor continued provisionally to allow us to read our books. Thanks to him we also had a slight improvement in the food (not, unfortunately, a lasting one). He had agreed that our meals should be prepared for us

[1] It is strange that Pellico should have written these words, for that letter, written on 28 January 1823 remained in the Imperial archives at Brünn. In January 1829 Pellico's father wrote to a friend: 'From the time he [Silvio] was sent to the fortress of the Spielberg I haven't had the consolation of receiving one letter from him.'

[2] A few of the prisoners, however, did succeed, not without danger to themselves, in smuggling out an odd letter to their families. On the other hand the prisoners found the means to write to one another. Their pens were slivers of wood, tooth-picks, pieces of their finger-nails; their paper was more often than not toilet-paper, and their ink medicinal powders or the juices of plants or flowers.

not by the kitchen of the prison purveyor, but by that of the Superintendent. He had in fact handed over to the latter an extra sum of money to be used for this purpose. This arrangement was not confirmed by higher authorities; but as long as the concession lasted it did me much good. Maroncelli also got back some of his energy.

For poor Oroboni it was too late. He had been given as companion first a lawyer, Solera, then a priest, Fr. Fortini.[1] No sooner were we paired by cells than we were again forbidden to talk from our windows, under threat of being put back into solitary confinement. From time to time we ignored this prohibition to greet one another, but there were no more long conversations.

Maroncelli's temperament harmonized perfectly with my own. The courage of the one sustained the courage of the other. If gloom or a gust of anger against the rigours of our state swept one of us, the other would cheer him with a joke or some suitable argument. A smile nearly always mitigated our sufferings.

As long as we had books, though re-read so often by now, they were pasture for the mind because they provoked ever fresh examinations, comparisons, judgements, rectifications, and so forth. We read or meditated in silence for a large part of the day and chatted during the hours of dinner and daily exercise as well as the whole evening.

Maroncelli in his subterranean cell had written many verses of great beauty. He used to recite them to me together with other verses that he was writing. I, too, wrote and recited verses. So our memories were exercised in retaining all this. It was wonderful how we were able to compose long pieces of poetry in our heads, to polish them again and again, and then turn them out every bit as perfect as if they had

[1] Antonio Solera of Milan and Fr. Fortini of Fratta were both arrested as *Carbonari* and condemned to death. The sentences were, however, commuted to twenty years hard for Solera, and fifteen years hard for Fr. Fortini. They were both pardoned in 1826, and died in 1846. Confalonieri says in his *Memorie* that they were released from the Spielberg in 1827.

been written down. In this way, little by little, Maroncelli composed and memorized several thousand lyrical and epic verses. I did a tragedy, *Leonora da Dertona*, and various other things.[1]

76

DEATH OF OROBONI

THAT summer Oroboni, who had suffered a great deal during the winter and spring, became very much worse. He was spitting up blood and developing dropsy.

I leave the reader to imagine our anguish at his fading away so near, without our being able to break down the cruel wall that prevented us from seeing him and giving him our affectionate services. Schiller used to bring us news of him. The poor young man, he told us, was suffering atrociously but his spirit never faltered. He had all spiritual consolation from the chaplain who, fortunately, spoke French.

He died on 13 June 1823, his name-day.[2] Some hours before he breathed his last he spoke of his father, a man of eighty,[3] and was so moved that he began to weep. Then he controlled himself, and said:

'Why should I cry for the most fortunate of my dear ones when he is on the eve of joining me in eternal peace?'

His last words were:

'From my heart I forgive my enemies.'

[1] Pellico has been accused of insincerity in that in his memoirs he describes these compositions of Maroncelli's as of 'great beauty', whereas in a letter (dated 1846) to Maroncelli's widow, who was anxious to publish some of her dead husband's best pieces, he says: 'I feel that to publish such compositions would be to do wrong to the memory of my friend.'

It is, however, quite possible that Maroncelli's verses did strike Pellico as of 'great beauty' in the squalor and darkness of their 'den'.

[2] 13 June is, in fact, the Feast Day of St. Anthony of Padua, after whom Oroboni had been christened.

[3] He was Oroboni's father only by adoption.

His eyes were closed by Fr. Fortini, a friend of his from childhood, and a man full of religion and charity.

Poor Oroboni! The icy chill that ran through our veins when we were told that he was no more. When we heard the voices and the steps of those coming to take away his dead body. When from our windows we saw the cart in which he was being carried to the cemetery. Two common convicts were drawing the cart, while four guards followed. With our eyes we accompanied the sorrowful procession to the cemetery gates. It passed inside the enclosure. It came to a halt in a corner. There was the grave.

A few minutes later back came the cart, convicts, and guards. One of these was Kubitzky. He said to me (kindly thought indeed in such a rough character):

'I have marked his burial place very carefully, so that if one day his relatives or his friends get permission to lift those bones and take them to his own country, they will know where they lie.'

How often had Oroboni said to me, as he looked out on to the graveyard from his window:

'I must get used to the idea of rotting down there! But the thought gives me the shivers, I must admit. A man doesn't seem as well off buried under these skies as in our own beloved peninsula.'

Then he would laugh and exclaim:

'What childishness! When a suit is worn out and has to be laid aside does it matter where it's thrown?'

At other times he said:

'I am preparing myself to die, but would resign myself more willingly on one condition: just to set foot once more in my father's house, put my arms round my father's knees, hear a word of blessing from him, then die.'

He would sigh and add:

'If it is not possible for this chalice to pass from me, my God your will be done.'

And the last morning of his life, he said, kissing a crucifi that Kral held up for him:

'You were God, and yet You felt the horror of death, for You said *Si possibile est, transeat a me calix iste!* Forgive me, then, if I too say it. But I want to repeat too those other words of yours: *Verumtamen non sicut ego volo sed sicut tu!*[1]

77

THOUGHTS OF OROBONI

After Oroboni's death I fell ill once more. I felt that I would soon be re-joining my dead friend, and longed to. But then would I be separated from Maroncelli without sorrow?

Several times, as he sat on his mattress reading or composing verses (or maybe pretending, like myself, to distract himself with such studies while in reality his mind was full of our misfortune), I looked at him with anguish in my heart and thought: 'How much sadder your life will be when Death breathes on me, when you see me carried out of this cell, look out, see the graveyard, and say, *Silvio is there too.*' I was moved at the thought of this poor survivor, and prayed either that he might be given another companion, capable of esteeming him as highly as I did, or else that God might prolong my own suffering and leave me the duty of mitigating this poor wretch's by sharing it with him.

I will not record how many times my illness left me and then returned. Throughout I was tended by Maroncelli like the most affectionate of brothers. He knew when speaking did me no good, and then was silent. He also knew when his words would cheer me, and then he always found subjects in harmony with the state of my mind, a state that he would sometimes encourage, and sometimes seek to transform little by

[1] These words, and the others quoted by Oroboni, are the words of Jesus Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane the night before His death, as they are recorded in the Gospel according to St. Matthew (xxvi. 39): 'My Father, if it be possible let this chalice pass from me. Nevertheless, not as I will but as Thou wilt.'

little. Never have I known a nobler spirit, and few his equal. A deep love of justice, great tolerance, a deep faith in human goodness and in the help of Providence, a lively sense of beauty in all the arts, an imagination full of poetry, all the most lovable gifts of mind and heart were united in him and made him dear to me.

I did not forget Oroboni, but though every day I bewailed his death, often I was filled with joy at the thought that my dear friend, freed from all evil and at peace in the bosom of God, must surely number among his reasons for happiness that of seeing me with a friend no less affectionate than himself. An inner voice seemed to reassure me that Oroboni was no longer in the place of expiation; yet I went on praying for him. Often I dreamed that I saw him praying for me, and I loved to persuade myself that those dreams were not accidental but true manifestations of him that God granted me as consolation. It would be foolish to describe the vividness of such dreams and the sense of real sweetness that they left in me for days on end.

Yet religious sentiments and my friendship for Maroncelli were lessening my sufferings all the time. One thought alone terrified me: the possibility that my poor friend whose health was already impaired, though not so much as my own, might go before me to the grave. Every time he fell ill, I trembled; and every time that I saw him better was a day of rejoicing.

These fears of losing him gave my affection for him added strength; and in him the fear of losing me had the same effect. Ah, there is much consolation in the alternations of anguish and hope that a man feels for the only friend left to him. Our lot was, without doubt, one of the most wretched to be found on earth, yet such mutual esteem and deep devotion were for us a sort of happiness even in the midst of our sorrows, and we really felt it.

78

FR. BATTISTA

I HAD fervently hoped that the chaplain,[1] with whom I had been so pleased at the end of my first illness, might be given to us as confessor, and that we might be allowed to see him from time to time even when we were not seriously ill. But the Governor, instead of giving him this office, assigned us an Augustinian, Fr. Battista by name,[2] until such time as Vienna either confirmed this choice or named someone else.

I was afraid of losing by this change; but I was mistaken. Fr. Battista was an angel of charity; his manners were well-bred, indeed polished; he could reason deeply on the duties of man. We asked him to come and visit us often. He used to come every month, and more frequently when he could. With the Governor's permission he also used to bring us a book or two, and assured us in his abbot's name that the entire library of the monastery was at our disposal. Had this lasted it would have been of great advantage to us; we did, however, profit by it for several months.

After we had made our confession he would stay on for a long time talking, and every word of his showed an upright soul, full of dignity, enamoured of man's greatness and sanctity. We had the fortune to bask in his light and affection for nearly a year, and never once did he belie himself. Never once did he utter even a syllable that could arouse any suspicion of his being at the service not of his calling but of politics. Never once did we detect in him any lack of delicate consideration.

At first, it is true, I mistrusted him and expected him to apply his keen brain to an unseemly probing of our affairs.

[1] This was Fr. Sturm, already mentioned in Chap. 73, p. 146.

[2] This Augustinian was probably, but not certainly, a member of the religious Augustinian Order known as the Canons Regular of the Lateran, which, like several other religious Orders and Congregations, follows the rule of life laid down by St. Augustine.

Such a suspicion is only too natural in a political prisoner, and great is one's relief when it vanishes, and one finds that the man speaking of God is moved only by zeal for the cause of God and of humanity.

He had a way with him of giving consolation that was peculiarly his own and most effective. I would accuse myself, for instance, of outbursts of anger against the severity of our prison discipline; he would moralize a little on the virtue of suffering in peace and of forgiving; then he would pass on to paint a vivid picture of miseries different from my own. Having lived for many years in cities and the countryside where he had mixed with both great and humble and pondered on human injustice, he was well fitted to describe the passions and customs of different social classes. Everywhere, he pointed out, there are the strong and the weak, the trampler and down-trodden; everywhere we must either hate our fellow men, or love them out of a generous spirit of indulgence and compassion. The examples he quoted to remind me that misfortune is universal, and of the good that we can draw from it, were in no way unusual. They were, in fact, quite obvious. But he presented them to me in language so just, so powerful that I felt deeply convinced by the conclusions he drew from them.

Yes, every time I listened to his affectionate rebukes and noble counsels I burned with love of virtue, no longer felt hatred for anyone, would have given my life for the least of my fellow men, and blessed God for having made me a man.

Unhappy is he who does not know how sublime a thing is Confession, or who imagines that he has to speak with contempt of it so as not be looked upon as one of the common herd! It is not true that because a man already knows he should be virtuous it is useless for him to be told so by others; and that his own reflections and suitable reading should be enough. No indeed! The living voice of a man has a quality that is not to be found in reading or in reflection. The soul is moved more powerfully by it; the impressions produced are deeper. In the words of our fellow men there is a life and an appositeness that we should seek in vain from books or our own thoughts.

79

MORE PRISONERS

At the beginning of 1824 the records-office of the Superintendent, which was at one end of our corridor, was transferred elsewhere and the office rooms together with others adjacent to them were turned into cells. From this we gathered that more political prisoners were expected from Italy. And in fact they soon arrived, the victims of a third trial;[1] all friends or acquaintances of mine. How sad I felt to hear their names. Borsieri was one of my oldest friends. To Confalonieri I had been attached for a shorter time, yet with all my heart too. God knows that if by getting myself condemned to very hard labour or any other imaginable torture I could have taken their penalty on myself and thus set them free, I would have done it. I do not say simply that I would have given my life for them because, after all, what is giving one's life for another? Suffering for him is much more.

At this time I yearned for Fr. Battista's consolation: but they no longer let him visit us. New instructions came to enforce the strictest discipline. As a first step, the rampart which we used for our daily exercise was surrounded with a fence so that no one could see us any more, not even from a distance by telescope. And so we lost the lovely sight of the hills around the city below. Nor was this enough. In order to reach the

[1] This third trial of *Carbonari* accused of plotting against the state (Austria) ended on 21 January 1824. Among those found guilty and condemned to prison were Pellico's two friends, mentioned in the text, Pietro Borsieri (see p. 40 and footnote 5), and Federico Confalonieri (see p. 100 and footnote 2). The arrival of Confalonieri at the Spielberg would appear to have been at least the occasion of 'the new instructions . . . to enforce the most strict discipline', as described by Pellico in this chapter. Confalonieri was, in fact, regarded by the Austrian authorities as the ringleader, or anyway the most influential, of the Lombard and Piedmontese *Carbonari*. To make *him* suffer as much as possible in prison (without drawing too much attention to this) it was necessary to enforce the strictest discipline for the other prisoners also.

rampart we had, as I have already said, to cross the courtyard when many could catch sight of us. To keep us hidden from every eye we were now denied the use of that place of recreation, and assigned another tiny space alongside our corridor which like our cells faced due north.

It is impossible to say how much this change made us suffer. I have not mentioned all the consolations that we used to find in the place which was now being taken from us. There we had seen the children of the Superintendent as they affectionately embraced their ailing mother who had passed the last days of her life in the same place. There too we had had an occasional chat with the blacksmith who also lodged there. There we had heard the merry songs and tunes that one of the corporals used to play on his guitar. And last of all there had been enacted an innocent love-story, not my own nor my companion's, but of a good-hearted Hungarian fruit-seller who had fallen in love with Maroncelli—a real little corporal deploying her forces to win his affections!

Even before Maroncelli had been put in my cell he and the woman had been seeing one another almost every day in that place and had struck up some sort of friendship. He was such an honest, dignified soul, so simple-hearted that he was quite oblivious to the fact that he had made the poor creature fall in love with him. It was I who opened his eyes. He hesitated to believe me, but lest I should happen to be right made it his duty to behave more coldly to her. This greater reserve on his part, instead of extinguishing the woman's love appeared to add fuel to it. As the window of her room was no more than a few feet above the level of the ground she used to jump out on our side with the ostensible excuse of hanging some garment in the sun or of doing some other odd job, and then would stay there looking at us; and if she could would start up a conversation.

Our poor guards, who were always tired through having slept little or nothing during the night, were only too glad to have a chance of being in that corner of the building where without being seen by their superiors they could sit down on

the grass and doze off. At such times Maroncelli suffered acute embarrassment, so evident was the poor girl's love for him. My own embarrassment was even greater. Scenes such as these, which would have been funny had the woman inspired us with little respect, were serious and I might say pathetic to us. The unhappy girl had one of those faces that show an undoubted habit of virtue and a need for respect. She was not beautiful, but blessed with an expression of such gentleness that her rather irregular features seemed beautified by every smile and movement of her face.

Were it my intention to write of love I should have many things to say of that unhappy and virtuous woman, now dead. But I just touch on this as one of the few incidents of our prison life.

80

OTHER PRIVATIONS AND CONSOLATIONS

NEW rigours made our lives more and more monotonous.[1]

How did we get through all 1824, all 1825, all 1826, all 1827? We were denied the use of books that the Governor had granted us provisionally. The prison became a veritable tomb,

[1] They reached their height in 1826 as a result of an extraordinarily close inspection and search of the cells of the political prisoners, carried out that year by order of Count Mitrowsky (see p. 123). The Chief of Police, Muth, assisted by two police officials, Bargratz, a lieutenant, and Hartmann, a secretary, went through the cells with a fine comb for almost nine hours. They made such a haul of odds and ends (pieces of linen, writing material, pins, pictures, prayer-books, wooden forks, etc., etc.) as to convince Muth and his henchmen that the regulations were not being observed either in the spirit or in the letter. Hence the new rigours of which Pellico speaks in the text. He himself, incidentally, had among other objects a pair of spectacles taken from him. Maroncelli relates in his *Addizioni* an incident which may have taken place at this time. Pellico, he tells us, had made and hidden a wooden spoon. This was discovered, but when it was taken from him, to the utter astonishment of all who heard him he cried out in a voice

but a tomb in which we were not left even its peace. Once a month, on some unspecified day, the Chief of Police, accompanied by a lieutenant and guards, came to make a thorough search of the cells. They used to strip us naked to examine all the seams of our clothes in case we had some paper or other object hidden there, and rip down the palliasses to rummage inside. Though they never succeeded in finding anything clandestine, there was something about this extra and hostile visit, repeated over and over again, that irritated me and gave me a temperature.

The years already passed had seemed so wretched, but now I thought of them longingly as a time of sweet consolations. Where now were the hours when I had buried myself in the study of the Bible, or of Homer? (By dint of reading Homer in the original I had so improved the little Greek I had that I was now a passionate lover of the language; how I regretted no longer being able to study it.) Many other friends too had been torn from my side: Dante, Petrarch, Shakespeare, Byron, Walter Scott, Schiller, Goethe, and many others besides. Among these others I numbered the writers of some books of Christian wisdom; Bourdaloue, Pascal, the authors of the *Imitation of Christ*, the *Philotea*,[1] and so on; books that a man throws away never to pick up again if he reads them in a spirit of narrow criticism which makes him sneer at any defect of taste or invalid arguments he finds in them; but which, to a man reading them without putting a wrong construction on weak points or allowing these to scandalize him, will reveal a profound philosophy that can nourish both heart and intellect.

One or two of these books on religious subjects were later

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of thunder: 'What! Will the Austrian monarchy collapse just because I take my food with a piece of wood instead of doing it with filthy fingers?' But this seems to contradict what Pellico says: see p. 180. Another result of the investigations of Muth was that the Superintendent was severely reprimanded, while poor Schiller was relieved of his post (see footnote, p. 115 and p. 162).

[1] A *Treatise on the Love of God* was written in 1614 by St. Francis de Sales (1567–1622): the 'Gentleman Saint' and Patron Saint of journalists.

sent to us as gifts from the Emperor. But we were utterly forbidden every other book that might serve for literary study. The gift of these works of asceticism in 1825 was due to a Dalmatian priest, Fr. Stefan Paulowitz, appointed our confessor by the authorities in Vienna, and made Bishop of Cattaro two years later.[1] To him we were also indebted for having finally obtained for us permission to hear Mass; this had always been denied us before with the excuse that it was impossible for us to be taken to church and yet kept separated, two by two, according to the regulations. As such a separation was impossible to observe we would go to Mass in three groups, one in the choir-loft, another under the choir-loft where they could not be seen, and a third in a tiny side-chapel giving on to the main church by a grating.

Maroncelli and I had for companions another six prisoners, who had been sentenced before us, and two of whom had been my neighbours in the *Piombi* of Venice. Each couple of prisoners was forbidden to speak to the others. We were taken by the guards to the place assigned to us in church, and after Mass was over taken back, two by two, to our cells. Mass was said for us by a Capuchin, a good and kindly soul who, at the end of his Mass, always recited a prayer to implore our release from prison in a voice trembling with emotion; as he came away from the altar he would cast a glance full of pity at each of the three groups of prisoners and then sadly bend his head in prayer.

[1] According to most of Pellico's fellow prisoners Fr. Stefan Paulowitz (1790–1853) was sent to the Spielberg by the Austrian authorities in an attempt to worm 'confessions' out of the prisoners. Pellico himself, writing in 1832 to Maroncelli, hinted at the 'baseness and stupidity' of Paulowitz (see footnote, p. 179).

81

DEATH OF SCHILLER

In 1825[1] Schiller was considered so weakened by the infirmities of old age that he was put in charge of other prisoners who apparently did not require very much attention. How much we regretted his going, and how he regretted leaving us!

His place was first taken by Kral, a man in no way inferior for goodness of heart. But he too was soon given other duties, and we had to make do with a man who, though not wicked, was rough and a stranger to any show of affection.

These changes deeply grieved me. Schiller, Kral, and Kubitzky, but the first two in particular, had helped us when we were ill as a father or a brother might have done. They were incapable of neglecting their duty, yet knew how to carry it out without hardness of heart. If there was some slight severity in their manner it was almost always involuntary and fully redeemed by their kindness to us. Sometimes I lost my temper with them, but how cordially they forgave me for it, how sincerely they longed to convince us that they were not devoid of affection for us, and how they rejoiced at seeing us convinced and regarding them as honest men.

Schiller fell ill several times after he left us, but each time he recovered. We asked for news of him with filial anxiety. When he was convalescing he sometimes came to walk under our windows. We would cough in greeting, then he would look up with a sad smile and say to the sentinel so that we could hear him:

'*Da sind meine Söhne!*' (My sons are there!)

Poor old man! How I suffered to see you drag your tottering legs along and without my being able to give you the support of my arm!

[1] Actually it was in 1826 that Schiller was relieved of his duties in connection with Pellico and his colleagues, not because of 'the infirmities of old age' but for the reason stated in footnote, pp. 159–160.

Sometimes he sat down on the grass and read from books he had loaned me. So that I might recognize them, he would read the titles out loud to the sentinel, or else he would repeat some extract. These books were, for the most part, stories such as one finds in almanacs, or romances of high moral tone but scant literary value.

After several apoplectic attacks he was taken to the military hospital. There, being already in a bad way, he soon died. He left a few hundred florins, the fruit of years of saving and loaned by him to some of his fellow soldiers. When he saw that the end was near he called these friends of his to his bedside and said to them:

'I have no relatives left. Each of you, then, may keep what he has. All I ask of you is to pray for me.'

One of these friends had a daughter of eighteen who was Schiller's god-child. A few hours before he died the honest soul sent for her. He could no longer speak distinctly, but pulled a silver ring from his finger, his last possession, and put it on hers. Then he kissed her, and wept as he did so. The young girl burst into loud sobs and covered him with her tears. He dried them with his handkerchief; then took hold of her hands and put them over his eyes. Those eyes were closed forever.

82

NEWS OF HOME

One by one all human consolations were taken from us, while our sufferings became ever greater. I resigned myself to the will of God, but sorrowfully; I seemed to feel my ills more every day instead of growing hardened to them.

One day a page of the Augsburg Gazette[1] was smuggled into my hands. One of my sisters had entered a convent, and the newspaper was spreading a most extraordinary rumour about me. It reported that 'Maria Angiola Pellico, the daughter

[1] The *Allgemeine Zeitung*.

of, etc., etc., took the veil in the convent of the Visitation in Turin on, etc., etc. She is the sister of the author of *Francesca da Rimini*, Silvio Pellico, who was released recently from the fortress of the Spielberg, pardoned by His Majesty the Emperor; a gesture of clemency worthy of such a magnanimous Sovereign, and which has filled the whole of Italy with joy since, etc., etc.' Then the article went on to sing my praises.

For the life of me I could not imagine why this fantastic nonsense of my pardon had been invented. It seemed unlikely that the journalist was just amusing himself. Was it maybe some trick by the German police?[1] Who can tell? Maria Angiola, however, were precisely the names of my younger sister. They must have been copied by other gazettes from the Gazette of Turin.

So that saintly girl has really become a nun, I thought. Maybe she embraced this state because she has lost her parents! Poor girl, she did not want me to suffer the confines of prison all alone, and so has shut herself up too. May the good Lord give her, more than He has given me, the virtues of patience and resignation. How often, angel that she is, will she not think of me in her cell. How often will she not do penances that God may lessen her brother's sufferings.

These thoughts moved me, but also tore at my heart. It was only too likely that my misfortunes had contributed to shortening the life of my father or mother, or even of both. The more I thought this over the more it seemed impossible to me that without such a loss my beloved Marietta would have abandoned her father's house. This conclusion weighed on me as if it were a certainty, and I fell into a state of anguished sorrow.

Maroncelli was no less deeply moved. Some days later he began to compose a poetical lament on the sister of a prisoner. The result was a most beautiful little poem exhaling sadness and compassion. When it was finished he recited it to me. How grateful I was to him! Among the countless verses made for nuns till then these were probably the only ones to be

[1] Curiously enough, the 'news' coincided with another piece of 'news' to the effect that Pellico had died in prison.

composed in a prison-cell, for the brother of a nun, and by a fellow prisoner. What a confluence of pathos and religion!

Thus friendship soothed my sorrows. From that time not a day went by but I wandered in thought, for hours on end, through a convent of virgins; among them was one whom I would gaze upon with more tender affection, for whom I begged ardently that God might beautify her solitude and not let her imagination paint too horrible a picture of my prison.

83

DEAD OR ALIVE?

THE reader should not imagine that because that gazette was smuggled to me I was often able to get news of the world outside. Far from it. All those around me were kind-hearted persons, but all in the grip of extreme fear. If then a little smuggling went on it was only when there seemed little danger. This was rare with so many searches, both routine and unexpected.

Except for this reference to my sister, news of my distant family was never smuggled in to me. For some time after this incident the fear that my parents were no longer alive was increased, rather than lessened, by the way in which the Chief of Police one day came and told me that my family were well.

'His Majesty the Emperor,' he said, 'has ordered me to give you good news of your relatives in Turin.'

Trembling with joy and surprise at this quite unprecedented announcement I asked for more details.

'I left parents, brothers, and sisters in Turin,' I said to him. 'Are they all alive? Oh, if you have a letter from any of them I beg you to let me see it!'

'I'm not allowed to show you anything. You must rest content with what I have said. It is a proof of the Emperor's goodness, the order to give you these consoling words. That's something that no one else has had done for him.'

'I grant it to be proof of the Emperor's goodness; but you must realize that I can draw no consolation from such vague words. Which relatives of mine are well? Have I lost any of them?'

'I am sorry, sir, but I can say no more than what I've been told to say.'

And with that he took himself off.

The intention had certainly been to bring me some relief of mind with this news of my family. Yet I convinced myself that, while the Emperor had yielded to the supplication of some relative of mine and allowed this scrap of news to be brought to me, he did not want me to be shown any letter from them lest I might see which of my dear ones had died.

A similar announcement was made to me some months later. No letter, no further explanation. They saw that I was not content with this and that I had been more upset than ever, so they never gave me any more news of my family. The thought that perhaps my parents were dead, and my brothers, and Giuseppina, my other beloved sister; that perhaps Marietta, the only survivor, would soon be spent by the sufferings of solitude and the hardships of her penitential life, all detached me more and more from life. Several times, when attacked by bouts of my usual infirmities, or of new ones such as terrifying colic pains accompanied by excruciating symptoms similar to those of cholera, I hoped to die. Yes, the phrase is exact: *I hoped.*

Yet men are a mass of contradictions, for when I glanced at my ailing companion I was filled with anguish at the thought of leaving him alone, and again wanted to live on.

84

MORE VISITORS

THREE times our prison was visited by high ranking dignitaries to make sure that there were no disciplinary abuses.

The first was Baron von Munch. He was moved to pity by the scanty light in our cells, and told us that he would try to prolong our day by having a lamp set for an hour or two outside the little gratings on our doors. His visit took place in 1825. His kind plan was carried out a year later. So from then on we could, thanks to this sepulchral light, see the walls of our cells and so avoid cracking our skulls when we moved.

The second visitor was Baron von Vogel. He found me in very bad health, and when he heard that the doctor, though he was of the opinion that coffee would do me good, did not dare prescribe it because it was considered a luxury, he gave his consent; and the coffee was prescribed.

Our third visitor was some gentleman of the Imperial Court, a man of between fifty and sixty, who showed a noble compassion for us both in his manners and his words. He was unable to do anything for us, but the kindly expression of his goodwill was a help, and we were grateful.

How a prisoner longs to see other fellow men! Christianity, which is so rich in humanity, has not forgotten to number among the Works of Mercy[1] that of *visiting the imprisoned*. The sight of men who are sorry for your misfortune makes that misfortune easier to bear, even when they are in no position to lighten it in a more practical way. Solitary confinement may

[1] Visiting the imprisoned is one of the Seven Corporal Works of Mercy, that is: feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, clothing the naked, harbouring the harbourless, visiting the sick, visiting the imprisoned, and burying the dead. They are known as Corporal Works of Mercy because they are done, from a supernatural motive, to relieve the temporal wants of the body. The first six of these Works are mentioned in the Gospel according to St. Matthew xxv. 35–6 and 42–3, while the last is mentioned in the Book of Tobias xii. 12.

turn out to be efficacious as a corrective for some but I believe that it is usually much more efficacious if not carried to extremes and is mitigated by a certain contact with society. At least that is how I am made. If I do not see other human beings I concentrate my love on too small a number of them, and do not love the rest; whereas, if I am allowed to see some, not very many but a fair number, I am filled with love for the whole human race.

Very often my heart has been so full of love for a very few people only and so full of hate for the rest that it has frightened me. At such times I have hurried to the window of my cell, longing to see some new face, and considered myself lucky when the sentinel was not pacing by too near the wall, but away from it so that I could see him; see if he has raised his head on hearing me cough, if he has had a kindly face. Whenever I have thought I saw any touch of pity there, I have felt a quiver of tenderness, as if that unknown soldier was an intimate friend. When he has passed on I have awaited his return with affectionate anxiety and if, on his return, he has glanced up I have been filled with joy as if at some great act of charity. But if he has not passed again in such a way that I could see him I have felt as mortified as someone in love who knows that the other does not care.

85

HAPPY RELEASES

THE cell next door where Oroboni had been was now occupied by Fr. Marco Fortini and Signor Antonio Villa.[1] The latter,

[1] A nobleman by birth, Villa became a *Carbonaro* in 1817. Arrested for his revolutionary activities and submitted to the usual process of interrogation by the police, he denounced his colleagues in the hope that he would be released himself. He was, however, sentenced to death, but the sentence was commuted to one of twenty years hard labour. Villa appears to have had a presentiment that he would not leave his prison alive.

who had been as strong as Hercules before his arrest, suffered a great deal from hunger in the first year of his imprisonment; when he did get more food he lacked the strength to digest it. He languished for a long time until finally, when reduced almost to death's door, he succeeded in being assigned a better ventilated cell. The noisome atmosphere of a narrow cell was no doubt most harmful for him, as it was for all the other prisoners. But the remedy he asked for was not enough. In the bigger cell he clung to life for a few more months; then spat up blood several times, and died.

He was assisted by his fellow-prisoner, Fr. Fortini, and by the Abbé Paulowitz, who had come post-haste from Vienna when it was clear he was dying.

Though I had not been attached to him so intimately as to Oroboni, I grieved deeply over his death. I knew that he was most tenderly loved by parents and wife. He himself was to be envied more than pitied, but those he left behind. . . . He had been my neighbour in the *Piombi*; Tremerello had brought me a number of poems from him (some of them deeply felt) and had taken him back some of mine.

When, after his death, I heard from the guards what misery he had been through, I felt as I were more strongly attached to him dead than when he was alive. The poor man could not resign himself to the thought of death, deeply religious though he was. He felt the full horror of that tremendous moment, but was always blessing God and crying to Him with tears:

'I cannot conform my will to yours, but I want to. Do You work this miracle in me!'

He did not have Oroboni's courage, but he imitated him in declaring that he forgave his enemies.

One evening, towards the end of that year (it was 1826),[1] we heard the sounds, ill-muffled, of several people moving along the corridor. Our ears had become very sharp at distinguishing innumerable sounds of different kinds. The door

[1] Confalonieri, however, says in his *Memorie* that Villa died in December 1827, and that Fr. Fortini and Solera were released that same year (see footnote, p. 150).

of one of the cells was unlocked; we knew that that was the lawyer Solera's. Another door was unlocked; it was Fr. Fortini's. From among several low voices we picked out that of the Chief of Police.

What's up? Another search at such a late hour? Why?

Soon they are out in the passage again. Then comes the beloved voice of our good Fr. Fortini:

'Oh, dear me! Do forgive me, please! I've forgotten a volume of my breviary.'[1]

With that he ran back to pick up the volume, and then rejoined the group. The door at the top of the staircase was unlocked, we listened to their footsteps right down to the bottom. We realized that the two lucky men had been freed, and sorry though we were not to follow them, we were exultant.

86

VAIN HOPES

Was the release of these two companions of ours to have no repercussions for us? Why was it that they, who like ourselves had been condemned to prison, the one for twenty years, the other for fifteen, were now walking out of prison while for us, and many others, no light of pardon shone? Were there more hostile prejudices against those of us who had not been freed? Or had it been decided to release us all, but at short intervals, and two at a time? Every month, maybe? Or every two or three months?

For some time we were left in this state of doubt. More than three months went by, and there were no more releases. Towards the end of 1827 we thought that December might be

[1] The *Roman Breviary* is the name given to the book (till recent years usually in four volumes corresponding roughly to the four seasons of the year) containing everything for the daily obligatory recitation of the *Divine Office* (psalms, lessons, hymns, prayers, etc.) by priests and certain other clerics of the Catholic Church.

chosen to mark the anniversary of the pardons granted. But December went by, and nothing happened. We went on hoping until the summer of 1828, when the first seven and a half years of my own sentence came to an end; years, according to what the Emperor had said, equivalent to the fifteen years of my sentence, if this were taken to run from the time of my arrest. If the time between my arrest and trial was not taken into consideration (which seemed the more likely supposition), so that my sentence started from the publication of my condemnation, the seven and a half years would not come to an end until 1829.[1]

Every date that we calculated passed, and no pardon came. In the meantime, even before Solera and Fr. Fortini had left, my poor friend Maroncelli developed a tumour on his left knee. The pain was negligible at first, and only made him limp. Then he began to find it difficult to drag his irons along and rarely went out for exercise. One autumn morning he made up his mind to go out with me for a breath of fresh air. Snow had already fallen; and at a fateful moment when I was not supporting him, he stumbled and fell. The blow at once made the pain in his knee flare up. We carried him to his bed, as he could no longer stand up. When the doctor saw him he at last decided to have the irons taken off. The tumour worsened from day to day, swelled out, and became huge. Such were the poor patient's sufferings that he could find no rest either in bed or out of it. Whenever he needed to move, get up, or lie down I had to take hold of the diseased leg as gently as I could, then move it very slowly as required. The slightest change of position sometimes meant quarter-hours at a time of agonizing pain.

Leeches, incisions, caustics, cold fomentations and hot; the doctor tried them all. They only increased the agony, nothing more. After the caustic had seared the flesh suppuration set in. The tumour became one festering sore; but it never grew smaller, nor did the lancing ever bring any easing of pain.

Maroncelli was in far more wretched a condition than I, yet how I suffered with him! To nurse so dear and worthy a

[1] See p. 177.

friend was consoling. But to watch him wasting away amid such long drawn out ghastly torments, unable to restore him to health; to foresee that his knee would never heal again; to realize that the patient thought death likelier than recovery; and to admire all the time his courage and serenity; ah, that was anguish indeed.

87

A SURGEON'S FEE

In this pitiable state he continued to write verses, to sing, to discourse; all this he did to deceive me, to hide from me some of his sufferings. He could no longer digest or sleep; he lost weight terrifyingly, often had turns of fainting. Yet after a few minutes he would rally and start to encourage me.

What he went through for nine long months is impossible to describe. At last permission was granted for a consultation to be held. The chief physician[1] came, approved of all that the doctor had tried, then, without giving any opinion of his own or saying what remained to be done, went off. A moment later the Superintendent came back and said to Maroncelli:

'The chief physician did not dare to say what he thought, here, in your presence. He was afraid you might not have the strength to listen to him telling you what is a cruel necessity. But I've assured him that you do not lack the courage.'

'I hope,' said Maroncelli, 'that I have given some proof of that, in suffering this torture without screaming my head off! Are they actually going to advise me . . .?'

'Yes, amputation. But the chief physician hesitates to advise it because of your exhausted physique. D'you feel you could stand up to an amputation in your state of weakness? Are you ready to take the risk?'

[1] This was a Dr. Steiner von Pfungen (see p. 138). The prison doctor at this time was a Dr. Schlosser who had taken Dr. Bayer's place (see footnote, p. 123).

'Of dying? Shan't I die soon just the same unless this disease is stopped now?'

'Very well, we'll send a full report of your case to Vienna. As soon as permission for amputation is granted. . . .'

'What! D'you mean permission's needed?'

'Yes!'

Eight days later the necessary permission arrived.[1] The patient was removed to a larger room, but asked that I should go with him.

'I may die under the operation,' he said. 'At least let me feel that I'm in the arms of a friend!'

He was allowed me as companion.

The Abbé Wrba, our confessor (Paulowitz's successor), came to give the Sacraments to the poor patient. When this act of religion was over we waited for the surgeons. None came. Then Maroncelli burst into song.[2]

At last the surgeons arrived, two of them. One of them was the ordinary prison surgeon, that is, our barber,[3] who, when operations were needed, had the right to do them himself, and would not cede this honour to anyone else. The other was a young man, a product of the Vienna school of medicine, with a reputation for skill. He had been sent by the Governor to direct and assist at the amputation, and though he would have

[1] In fact, it was only *four* days later. It is difficult to see why Pellico should have thought that it was eight days, yet it is certain that Maroncelli agreed to the operation on 14 June and that the Imperial permission for him to lose his leg came on 18 June.

[2] It was his own composition, too, and very likely his own music into the bargain, for Maroncelli was an expert composer. Maroncelli tells us that he wrote the song for his mother in case he should die as a result of the operation. Two years later, however, when he left the Spielberg, his mother was dead.

[3] The ordinary prison surgeon, who apparently was also the prison barber, was a certain Linhardt. The name of the other surgeon is not known. Linhardt does not seem to have made a favourable impression on Pellico, although, strangely enough, Maroncelli had great confidence in him. The operation, incidentally, took place, as Maroncelli observes with bitter irony, on the anniversary of the Battle of Waterloo 'by a strange coincidence of very important events and of very small ones!'

liked to do it himself had to be content with keeping an eye on it.

The patient was made to sit on the side of the bed with his legs hanging down, while I held him in my arms. A band was tied tightly round the leg above the knee at a point where the flesh looked healthy. The old surgeon began to cut all round the thigh to the depth of a finger; then he pulled back the skin above the incision and proceeded to cut through the excoriated muscles. The blood gushed out in torrents from the arteries but these were soon ligatured with silk thread. Finally the bone was sawn through.

Not a cry came from Maroncelli. When he saw that his amputated leg was being carried off he gave a glance of pity at it, and then turning to the surgeon who had operated on him said:

'You have freed me from an enemy, and I have no means of rewarding you for it!'

On the window-sill was a glass with a rose in it.

'Please bring me that rose,' he said to me.

I brought it. And he held it out to the old surgeon saying:

'I have nothing else to give you in token of my gratitude.'

The surgeon took the rose, and wept.

88

CONVALESCENCE AND ILLNESS

THE two surgeons had been under the impression that the hospital of the Spielberg prison was provided with everything necessary for the operation except instruments, which they brought themselves. But after the operation was over they found that several necessary items, such as oil-cloth, ice, bandages, were not to be had.

Poor mutilated Maroncelli had to wait two hours for all these to be brought up from the town below. Then at long last he could lie down on the bed; and ice was placed on the stump.

Next day they removed the clotted blood that had formed on the stump, washed it, pulled down the skin over it, and bandaged the leg. For several days after this the patient was given only half a cup of broth with the beaten yolk of an egg. When the danger of post-operational fever was over they began gradually to build up his strength with more nourishing food. The Emperor had sent orders that he should be given good food from the Superintendent's kitchen until such time as he should have recovered his strength.

The cure took forty days. After that we were moved back into our cell. This had meantime been enlarged by an opening in one of the walls, so that our own former den was now linked up with the one once occupied by Oroboni and, latterly, by Villa.

I shifted my bed to the very spot on which Oroboni's had stood, where he had died. Sleeping on that identical spot was dear to me; it made me feel nearer to him. Often I dreamed of him and had the impression that his spirit was actually visiting me and bringing me heavenly peace.

The horrible spectacle of Maroncelli's tortures before the amputation, during the operation itself and afterwards, strengthened my spirit. God who had granted me enough health during the illness to do my necessary duties as nurse took it from me as soon as the patient could support himself on his crutches.

I had a number of most painful glandular tumours. On getting over these I began to suffer from pains in the chest which I had had several times before but which now threatened to choke me, from fits of dizziness, and from spasmodic dysentery.

'My hour has come!' I said to myself. 'Am I going to be less patient than my friend?'

So I tried to imitate his virtue as far as I knew how.

There is no doubt that every state of human experience has its own duties. Those of a sick man are to be patient and brave, and to make every effort not to be disagreeable with those around him.

Maroncelli on his pitiful crutches was no longer so agile as

he used to be, and this distressed him, for he was afraid that he was being less useful to me in my sickness. He was afraid also that I might not avail myself of his services when I needed them in order to spare him moving around and so tiring himself out. Sometimes this actually was the case but I managed to prevent him from noticing it.

Although he had recovered his strength he was not free from pain. Like all those who have lost a limb he suffered painful sensations in the nerves of the stump almost as if there had been no amputation. Thus he felt pains in the foot, leg, and knee that he no longer had. Moreover the bone had been badly sawn, so that it protruded through the raw flesh and often caused sores. Only after nearly a year did the flesh become hard enough for the stump not to burst through any more.

89

SCURVY!

OTHER sufferings, however, assailed the poor man, almost without respite. At first it was arthritis, which after attacking the joints of his hands tortured the whole of his body for months. Then it was scurvy; this in a short time covered his body with terrifying livid blotches.

I tried to comfort myself by thinking:

'Since we have to die in here anyway it's as well that one of us has got scurvy. It's contagious and will lead us to the grave, if not together, at least within a short distance of one another.'

Both of us prepared ourselves for death with all tranquillity. Nine years of prison and suffering had finally reconciled us to the thought of the utter disintegration of bodies both so ruined in health and in need of peace. And our souls trusted in the goodness of God. We believed we should meet again in a place where all human passions cease and where, we prayed, we should also meet again in peace those who did not love us here below.

Scurvy had wreaked havoc during previous years in those cells.[1] When the authorities were told that Maroncelli was suffering from this horrible disease they were frightened of a new epidemic, and agreed to the request of the doctor—whose opinion was that the only real cure for Maroncelli was fresh air—that the patient should be kept indoors as little as possible.

I, as Maroncelli's cell-mate and also suffering from some blood infection, enjoyed the same privilege. We stayed out of doors during the times when the other prisoners were not taking their exercise; that is, for some two hours in the morning from half an hour before dawn, then during the dinner-hour if we liked, and finally for three hours in the afternoon until dusk. That was on ordinary days. On feast-days when the other prisoners were not allowed to take their usual exercise, we stayed out of doors from morning to night except for the dinner-hour.

Another unfortunate prisoner, a man of about seventy with very bad health, was put with us since it was thought that the fresh air might help him also. This was Signor Constantino Munari,[2] a friendly old man and a lover of literary and philosophical studies whose company we found very pleasant.

The seven and a half years of my sentence (counting from the date not of my arrest but of my conviction), were due to come to an end either at the beginning of July 1829, according to the date of the Imperial confirmation of the sentence or on 22 August according to the date of its publication. But when this latter date also came and went, all hope died in me. Till that moment Maroncelli, Munari, and myself had sometimes pretended we were returning to the world outside, to our dear Italy, to our relatives; and this would give rise to discussions full of longing and affection.

[1] During previous years. See p. 139.

[2] This 'friendly old man', a lawyer by profession, had been a *Carbonaro* of uncommon activity and zeal. He was arrested in 1818 and condemned to death. The sentence was, as usual, commuted to one of hard labour, in this case of twenty years. Munari, however, was not informed of this by the Commission, who hoped thereby to frighten him into making a 'confession'. The 'old man' steadfastly refused to be frightened.

With the passing of August, and then of September, and finally of the whole of that year, we became resigned to the idea of hoping for nothing more in this world except an unchangeable continuation of our friendship and God's help to end worthily the rest of our long sacrifice.

What blessings beyond all price are friendship and religion! They beautify even the lives of prisoners for whom the possibility of a pardon is extinguished. God is truly with the unfortunate; with those unfortunates who love one another.

90

TWO PRIESTS

After the death of Villa the place of the Abbé Paulowitz (who was made a Bishop) as our confessor was taken by a Moravian, the Abbé Wrba, professor of New Testament exegesis in Brünn and a brilliant pupil of the Sublime Institute of Vienna. This Institute is a religious congregation founded by the famous Frint[1] when he was confessor to the Court. All the members of this congregation are priests, who, after taking their degree in theology, continue their studies in the Institute under strict discipline to acquire the greatest possible learning. The Founder's aim is excellent: that of ensuring a continual sowing of the seeds of true and robust learning among the German clergy, an aim that in general is achieved.

The Abbé Wrba, being stationed in Brünn, was able to give us much more of his time than Paulowitz. He thus became for us what Fr. Battista had been, except that he was not allowed to lend us books. We had long discussions together which were of great help to my religious life (or rather, since this may sound exaggerated, which *seemed* to be of great help to it), and this was of much comfort to me.

He fell ill in 1829, then had to take up other duties, and could not come to us any more. We were very sorry, but lucky

[1] Jakob Frint was a Bohemian priest.

to find his place taken by another learned and excellent man, the vice-parish priest Ziak.

Among those German[1] priests who came to us not one was anything but good; not one whom we found an instrument of politics—a fact easy enough to discover; not one in fact who did not unite in himself learning, open profession of his Catholic faith, and deep philosophy. How much to be respected are such priests of the Church! The few that I got to know gave me a most favourable opinion of the German Catholic clergy.

The Abbé Ziak also had long discussions with us. He even gave me an example of how to bear my own sufferings with serenity; for he was tortured by constant pain from some infection of the teeth, throat, and ears but was none the less always smiling.

Meanwhile all the fresh air made Maroncelli's sores from scurvy gradually disappear; and Munari and myself were also better.

91

AT LAST!

THE first of August 1830 came round. Ten years had passed since I had lost my liberty; eight and a half of hard labour. The day was a Sunday. We went, as on the other feast-days, into the usual enclosure. From the low surrounding wall we looked down as usual into the valley below us and into the cemetery where Oroboni and Villa lay buried, and as usual we spoke of the repose that one day our own bones would find there. We sat down as was our wont on the usual bench to wait until the poor women prisoners had gone to their Mass,

[1] Pellico underlined the adjective in his MS as if he meant thereby to exclude anyone who was not a German or who did not speak German (see footnote, p. 113). It is quite likely that he was thinking of the Abbé Paulowitz, who was a Dalmatian, and who appears to have been 'an instrument in the hands of politicians'.

which was celebrated before ours and in the same small chapel, adjacent to our corridor.

It is a custom throughout Germany for the congregation to sing hymns in their own tongue during Mass. But as the population of the Austrian Empire is a mixture of Germans and Slavs, and the majority of the common prisoners in the Spielberg prisons belong to either the one or the other of these races, the hymns used to be sung in German on one feast-day, and in Slavonic the next. In the same way, two sermons would be preached every feast-day in alternate languages. As for us, we loved listening to those hymns and to the organ accompanying them.

Among the women there was one whose voice went straight to my heart. Poor things! Some were very young. A love affair, a fit of jealousy, a bad example had led them to crime. I can still hear them fervently singing the *Sanctus*: '*Heilig! Heilig! Heilig!*'[1]; I shed another tear as I listened.

At ten o'clock the women left the chapel and we went into Mass. Again I saw through the solitary grating that separated us those of my companions in misfortune who were going to assist at Mass from the choir-loft, all pale and gaunt, dragging their chains. After Mass we went back to our dens. A quarter of an hour later dinner was brought in. We were preparing our table, which meant putting a piece of wood on a plank-bed and bringing out our wooden spoons, when the Vice-Superintendent, Wegrath, came into the cell.

'I'm sorry to disturb your dinner,' he said, 'but please have the goodness to follow me. The Chief of Police is waiting for you outside.'

In very ill humour, for the Chief of Police had a habit of coming to bother us by searches, or interrogations, we followed the good man to the visitors' parlour. There we found the

[1] The *Sanctus* (or the triple *Holy! Holy! Holy!*) is that part of the Mass which marks the end of the prayer called the *Preface* and the beginning of the most important section of the Mass, known as the *Canon*. In certain Masses (Sung Mass, High Mass) it is sung by the choir after the priest at the altar has recited it.

Chief of Police and the Superintendent. The former bowed more politely than he was wont to do. He then took up a sheet of paper and haltingly, as if fearing to give us too great a shock if he expressed himself more precisely, he said:

'Gentlemen . . . I have the pleasure . . . the honour . . . to inform you . . . that His Majesty the Emperor has granted you yet . . . another favour. . . .'

He hesitated to tell us what this favour might be. We thought it must be some mitigation in our sentence, such as exemption from the nuisance of work,[1] or an extra book or two, or maybe even less revolting food.

'But,' he said, 'do you not understand?'

'No, sir. Please be good enough to tell us what this favour is.'

'It's freedom for both of you, and for a third, who will soon be in your arms!'

This news should have made us burst out into cries of joy. But our thoughts flew to our relatives of whom we had had no news for a long time, and the doubt of perhaps not finding them alive so overwhelmed us that it killed the happiness which should have been aroused in us by the news of our release.

'You are silent,' said the Chief of Police. 'I had expected to see you jumping for joy!'

'Please bring our gratitude to the notice of the Emperor,' I answered. 'But since we have no news of our families we are

[1] Surely a masterpiece of understatement! The work here referred to consisted of sawing wood, preparing charpie (that is, shredding down lint to form a soft material used for dressing wounds), and making stockings from wool so impregnated with oil and grease that the stench of it brought on splitting headaches. The prisoners had to hand in a pair of these stockings *every week* under penalty of severe punishment. As these stockings had to be made (knitted, can hardly be the right word) in the perpetual gloom of the dungeons it is not surprising that the prisoners preferred to be punished for not handing in their weekly quota of stockings rather than submit to the torture of working in such conditions. Since Pellico and Maroncelli had not finished their stint of stockings on the morning they were sent for by the Chief of Police they at once jumped to the conclusion that they were going to be punished for their failure to do the work.

bound to fear the loss of persons very dear to us. This uncertainty oppresses us, even at the very moment which should be one of greatest joy.'

At this he gave Maroncelli a letter from his brother that calmed his fears. He told me that there was nothing from my family; this made me fear some disaster[1] even more.

'Now go back to your cell,' he went on, 'and in a little while I'll send along the third prisoner who's been pardoned.'

Off we went and waited anxiously for the third man to appear. How we wished they might all be set free, but it was to be only one. Old Munari, maybe? Or this one! Or that one! There was not one for whom we did not pray that it might be he.

At last the door was thrown open, and we saw that our companion was to be Andrea Tonelli from Brescia.[2] We embraced him. No longer able to eat, we talked till evening, mourning the friends we were leaving behind.

At sunset the Chief of Police came back to take us out of that abode of wretchedness. Our hearts bled as we passed the cells of so many beloved friends whom we could not take with us. How much longer would they have to languish in those cells? How many were doomed to lingering deaths in there?

Soldiers' cloaks were thrown over our shoulders and caps were thrust on to our heads; and so, dressed as convicts but unchained we came down from that baneful mount and were taken into the city, to cells in the police-station.

It was a most beautiful moonlit night. The streets, the houses,

[1] As a matter of fact there were numerous letters to Pellico from his family, but they were, even at that moment, in the hands of the police in Brünn.

[2] He was arrested in 1824 and condemned to death as a *Carbonaro*. The authorities offered him his life and liberty on condition that he would betray his colleagues. He turned down the offer, but his death sentence was commuted to one of ten years hard labour. When he reached his parents' home after his release in 1830 he found that his mother had died a few days before. She had been informed in a letter from the Spielberg (a letter that had been held back and then for some reason sent on to her after her son's release) that her son was dying in prison (see p. 189).

the people we met, everything struck me as so pleasant and yet so strange after not having looked on such a scene for so many years.

92

TO VIENNA

In the cells of the police-station we waited for an Imperial Commissary, who was to arrive from Vienna in order to accompany us to the frontier. In the meantime, since our luggage had been sold up, we provided ourselves with linen and suits and doffed the prison uniform.

Five days later the Commissary arrived and the Chief of Police handed us over to him, at the same time consigning to him the money we had brought with us to the Spielberg, together with the proceeds from the sale of our luggage and books. This money was handed over to us on reaching the frontier.

The expenses of our journey were met unstintingly by the Emperor.

The Commissary was Herr von Noe,[1] a gentleman employed in the secretariat of the Ministry of Police. We could not have had assigned to us anyone more polished or cultured. He showed us every consideration.

But when I left Brünn I was having great difficulty in breathing and the motion of the carriage so increased this that towards evening I was gasping in a terrifying manner for breath, and it was feared I might choke at any minute. I was wracked by burning fever all night, so that next morning the Commissary was uncertain whether I should be able to

[1] Despite what Pellico says here and elsewhere (see Chap. 93, pp. 185, et seq. and Chap. 97) in defence of Herr von Noe it seems certain now that the Imperial Commissary had indeed been instructed to do his best to extract what information he could from the three prisoners about their colleagues in the Spielberg.

continue the journey to Vienna. I said yes, and we set out; my asthma was appalling and I could neither eat, drink, nor speak.

I reached Vienna half-dead. We were given good lodgings at the general headquarters of police. They put me to bed, and sent for a doctor; he ordered me to be bled and I felt better. His cure was a strict diet and plenty of digitalis for a week, and I recovered. The doctor's name was Singer; he cared for me in a truly friendly spirit.

I was most anxious to set out again, all the more because news had reached us of the Three Days of Paris.[1] The Emperor had signed the decree of our release on the very day the Revolution broke out. Of course, he would not revoke it now; but it was not unlikely that, since the whole of Europe was once again faced with critical days, Austria would be afraid of popular risings in Italy. The authorities might not be anxious for us to return home just then. We were sure not to be sent back to the Spielberg, but were afraid someone might suggest to the Emperor that we be packed off to some city of the Empire far from our peninsula.[2]

I pretended to be recovered more fully from my illness than I was and begged for our departure to be hastened. But I also very much wanted to present myself to His Excellency the Count of Pralormo, Envoy of the Court of Turin to the Court of Austria, to whose kindness I knew I owed much. He had exerted himself with the most generous and unflinching zeal

[1] The revolt in Paris from 27 to 29 July 1830, caused, on the one hand, by the passing of certain laws approved by Charles X on 25 July to break the power of the opposition, and, on the other, by the dissolution of Parliament by order of Charles. Charles lost his throne which then passed to Louis Phillipe d'Orleans (see footnote, p. 34).

[2] The Austrian authorities in Lombardy and Venice did, in fact, warn the government in Vienna that it would be too dangerous to let Pellico and his companions return to Italy at such a juncture. The Emperor became alarmed and sent word to Von Noe not to proceed any farther (see p. 185). Von Noe, however, at once reported back to Vienna that in his opinion it would be tantamount to an admission of fear for the government to keep the three prisoners, now pardoned, out of Italy. Vienna saw the force of his argument and the three were allowed to continue their journey home.

to bring about my release. But no exception whatever could be made to the Imperial prohibition for me to see anyone at all.

As soon as I was convalescent the Count did us the kindness of sending for several days his own carriage to take us round Vienna. The Commissary was obliged to come with us and make sure that we spoke to no one. So we saw the fine church of St. Stephen, the city's delightful promenades, the nearby Lichtenstein villa, and last of all the imperial villa of Schönbrunn. While we were driving through the magnificent roads of Schönbrunn the Emperor passed, and the Commissary made us draw back lest the sight of our gaunt figures distress him.

93

BAD NEWS

At long last we left Vienna. I held out until we reached Bruck. There my asthma became violent once more. A doctor was sent for, a Herr Judmann, a most courteous man. He ordered me to be bled, to stay in bed, and continue the digitalis. After two days of this I insisted we should set out again.

Our journey through Austria and Styria and then into Carinthia was uneventful. But we had hardly entered the village of Feldkirchen near Klagenfurt when a countermand reached us. We were to remain where we were until further orders. The effect of this on us can be imagined; I also had the regret of being responsible for bringing so much harm to my two companions; if they were not to succeed in returning home it would be the fault of my fateful illness.

For five days we remained in Feldkirchen,[1] and during this time also the Commissary did everything possible to entertain us. There was a little theatre in the village where a comedy was

[1] From Feldkirchen Pellico and Maroncelli wrote to the Emperor to thank him for the pardon he had so graciously granted to them, and to beg him to allow them to stop at Milan. The Imperial response to this prayer was a curt refusal.

being presented, and he took us there. Then one day he provided us with the amusement of some hunting. Our host, several young men of the district, and the owner of a fine forest were the hunters, while we enjoyed the spectacle from a vantage-point where we had placed ourselves.

Finally a courier arrived from Vienna with instructions for our Commissary to take us on to our destination after all. This happy news filled me and my companions with exultation; but at the same time I was trembling with fear lest the day was drawing near for me to make the fateful discovery that I had no longer a father or a mother or, who knew, which of my other dear ones?

The approach to Italy from those parts is not pleasing to the eye. From some very beautiful mountains on German soil one comes down to long stretches of barren, wild Italian plains. The traveller who does not know our peninsula and passes through those plains must laugh at his splendid concept of it and suspect he has had his leg pulled by those whom he has heard praising it so highly.

The ugliness of those parts helped to sadden me more. To see our skies again, to look into faces without the stamp of the North, to hear our own language from every mouth: these things stirred me, but to an emotion nearer tears than joy. How often as I sat in our carriage, I covered my face with my hands and pretended that I was asleep when really I was crying. How often at night I did not close an eye but lay burning with fever, calling down heart-felt blessings on my beloved Italy and thanking Heaven for having given me back to her. Or I lay there torturing myself with the thought of having no news from home, and imagining every sort of disaster. Or I reflected that in a short time I should have to separate, perhaps for ever, from a friend who had suffered so much with me and who had given me such proofs of a brother's love.

Alas, my capacity for feeling had not been destroyed by those long years in a grave, but it was a capacity so great for sorrow, so little for joy.

I should have dearly loved to visit Udine once more and that

inn where those two generous-hearted friends had pretended they were waiters and furtively touched our hands. But we skirted the town on the left and passed on.

94

SEPARATED!

PORDENONE, Conegliano, Ospedaletto, Vicenza, Verona, Mantua! How many memories they brought back to me! From Pordenone hailed a young man of promise, a friend of long ago who had perished in the disasters of the Russian campaign.[1] Conegliano was the town where, according to the under-warders of the *Piombi*, Zanze had been taken. In Ospedaletto had been married a sweet unhappy girl who no longer lived there. Once I had looked on her with veneration, and still do.

In all those places rose up memories of varying degrees of happiness, and nowhere more than in Mantua. It seemed yesterday, when I was there in 1815 with Lodovico[2]; but yesterday that I had gone there with Porro, in 1820. There were the same streets, the same public squares, the same buildings; but such changes in the life of the town! So many of my acquaintances had been carried off by death or driven into exile. A new generation also had grown up that I had last seen as children. And I was forbidden to run from house to house, forbidden to speak to anyone about this or that friend.

To crown all my sorrows it was in Mantua that Maroncelli and I were to be separated. We spent a night there, in deep gloom; I was as perturbed as a man on the eve of hearing his own sentence.

Next morning I washed my face and then looked at myself

[1] Nothing is known of this young man, nor of the 'sweet unhappy girl' mentioned later in the text.

[2] Pellico went to Mantua in 1815 to see a dramatic play, *Ida*, by his friend Lodovico di Breme. The play had been a failure.

in the mirror to see if anyone could still notice any sign of tears. I assumed as convincing an air of cheerfulness and calm as possible; uttered a short but, I fear, very distracted prayer to God; then, hearing Maroncelli already moving about on his crutches and talking to the waiter, I went to embrace him. Both of us seemed full of courage for our separation; our voices were firm but trembled a little.

The police-officer who is to take him to the frontiers of Romagna arrives. It is time for them to leave. We hardly know what to say to one another. An embrace, a kiss, another embrace. Then he gets into the carriage and vanishes. Like one annihilated with grief I return to my room, throw myself on to my knees, pray for this poor mutilated friend of mine torn from his friend, and burst into convulsive sobs.

I have known many excellent men but none more affectionate and sociable than Maroncelli, none more educated in all the refinements of courtesy, or further removed from all uncouthness of manner, none more constantly mindful that virtue is made up of a continual exercise of tolerance, generosity, and common-sense.

May Heaven bless you wherever you may be, companion of mine in so many years of sorrow! May Heaven give you other friends whose love is equal to mine, and their kindness greater.[1]

[1] Maroncelli did not remain long in Italy. Shortly after his return to his native Forlì he went to Florence, and then to Paris. In Paris, where he stayed for two years, he married a German woman who bore him a daughter (christened *Silvia*). From Paris he emigrated with his family to New York, and there, in 1845, he died a pauper, blind, and out of his mind. While he was in Paris, in 1833, he published his *Addizioni alle mie prigioni* or *Additions* (see footnote, p. 129) to Pellico's *Le mie prigioni*, much to Pellico's grief and annoyance. Not only had Maroncelli been indiscreet enough, as it struck Pellico, to mention incidents and events that Pellico had thought fit to omit in his own book, but he had also been foolish enough to allow, as Pellico puts it, 'certain phrases' to escape him 'which provoked against his book the ecclesiastical censure'. The *Addizioni* were, as a consequence of this censure, put on the Index of Forbidden Books. But Pellico's memoirs had been published with it in one volume, and Pellico did not relish the idea of seeing the child of his own heart in such company. Despite all this, however, Pellico and Maroncelli remained the best and most affectionate of friends.

95

BACK TO MILAN

THAT same morning we left Mantua for Brescia. There was set free my other fellow prisoner, Andrea Tonelli. There he was told that he had lost his mother, and his disconsolate weeping tore at my heart.

Grieved though I was for so many reasons an incident made me laugh a little.

On one of the tables of the inn there was a theatre handbill. I picked it up and read: '*Francesca da Rimini*,' it ran. 'A play set to music,' etc.

'Whose is this opera?' I asked the waiter.

'I don't know who put it into verse and who into music,' he answered, 'but, anyway, it's the famous *Francesca da Rimini* that we all know!'

'All? You're mistaken! What should I who come from Germany know of your Francescas?'

The waiter, a sturdy young man with that disdainful sort of face typical of the people of Brescia, looked at me with contempt and pity.

'What should you know about our Francescas? Sir, it is not a question of Francesc*as*. It is a question of one unique *Francesca da Rimini*. I mean the tragedy by Silvio Pellico. They are presenting it with music here, spoiling it a bit, perhaps, but it's the same play.'

'Oh, Silvio Pellico? I seem to have heard him mentioned. Isn't he that good-for-nothing who was condemned to death and then hard labour eight or nine years ago?'

I almost paid dearly for this sally. He glanced around, then looked at me and bared thirty-two splendid teeth; and had he not heard some noise just then I think he would have knocked me down! Instead he went off muttering:

'Good-for-nothing indeed!'

But before I left the inn he found out who I was. Then

whenever I was in the room he could neither speak, nor answer, nor serve, nor move. All he could do was rivet his eyes on me, rub his hands, and repeat without rhyme or reason: 'Yes, sir! Yes, sir!' as if he were sneezing.

Two days later, on 9 September, I reached Milan with the Commissary. As we drew near and I caught sight once more of the dome of the cathedral; as we drove once again along that avenue of Loreto where I had been so often in times past, and had such delightful strolls; as we entered again through the Porta Orientale and I found myself once more in the Corso and saw again those houses, those churches, those streets, I felt the most tender and tormenting emotions: a feverish longing to stop for a while in Milan and to embrace once again those of my friends whom I might still find there; an infinite sorrow at the thought of those whom I had left behind in the Spielberg, of those who were wanderers in strange lands, and of those who had died; a lively gratitude at the memory of the affection shown me in general by the Milanese; a certain indignation against some who had calumniated me while they had always been the object of my good-will and esteem.

We put up at the *Bella Venezia*. I had often been there before at happy convivial parties, and paid visits there to many a foreigner of note; there an elderly and respectable lady, foreseeing the misfortunes that would befall me if I remained in Milan, had pleaded with me in vain to go with her to Tuscany.[1] Tender memories of a past so thickly strewn with joys and sorrows, a past so swiftly gone!

The waiters at the inn soon found out who I was. The word got around, and that evening I saw many persons stopping in the square outside and looking up at our windows. One of

[1] Pellico's commentators have failed to discover the identity of this lady. It is certain that Pellico might have escaped the hands of the Austrian police had he wished to do so. He was advised by his friends to leave the country, but he preferred to remain and meet a fate that he knew would sooner or later catch up on him as a result both of Maroncelli's letter to his brother Francesco (see footnote, p. 8), and of another letter, this time Pellico's, which Maroncelli had in his possession to give to Pellico's brother, Lodovico. In it Pellico asked Lodovico to help Maroncelli to get the *Carbonari* into Genoa.

these persons appeared to recognize me (although I do not know who he was) for he saluted me by raising both arms.

But where had Porro's sons, my own sons also, gone? Why did I not see them? [1]

96

SORROW AND HOPE

The Commissary took me to police headquarters where he introduced me to the Chief. How strange to see again the place that had been my first prison! What sufferings flooded back to me! I thought with tender affection of you, Melchior Gioia, and of how I had seen you pacing hurriedly up and down between the narrow walls of your cell; of the hours that you sat nailed to a table pouring out the noble sentiments of your heart in writing; of the signals that you used to make to me with your handkerchief, and the sadness with which you looked at me when they forbade you to signal me any more! I conjured up the tomb where you lie, a tomb as unknown, perhaps, to the majority of those who had loved you as it was unknown to me, and I prayed for peace on your soul.

I also recalled the little dumb boy, the voice of Maddalena so full of pathos, my tremors of pity for her, the thieves, my neighbours, the pretended Louis XVII, and that unfortunate convict who was caught with my letter on him and I thought had screamed under the bastinado.

All these memories and others too pressed crushingly upon me like anguished dreams, but I felt overwhelmed even more by the memory of the two visits made to me by my father in that place ten years before. How the kindly old soul had deceived himself then with his hopes that I could soon join him in Turin. Had he had any idea, at that moment, that his son was to spend ten years in prison, and such a prison, would he have borne up? And when his illusions vanished had he and my mother been strong enough to withstand such a lacerating

[1] See footnote, p. 2.

sorrow? Was I to be allowed to see both of them again? Or maybe just one? And if so, which one?

Most tormenting of doubts and forever springing anew!

Here was I, at the door of my home, so to speak, and I did not know yet if my parents were still alive; if, in fact, even one of my family was still alive!

The Chief of Police received me with kindness and allowed me to remain at the *Bella Venezia* with the Imperial Commissary instead of having me locked up elsewhere. Apart from this I was not allowed to show myself to anyone; so I made up my mind to set out again the next morning. I succeeded only in getting permission to see the Piedmontese Consul to ask for news of my relatives. I would have gone to him but I fell ill with a temperature and had to take to bed; so I sent him word, begging him to come to me. He was good enough not to make me wait, and how deeply grateful I was to him for this!

The news he gave me of my father and my eldest brother was good. About my mother, my other brother, and my two sisters I remained in cruel suspense. Somewhat consoled but not sufficiently, I should have liked to raise my spirits more by prolonging my conversation with the Consul. He was unsparing in kindness, but at length he had to leave me.

When I found myself alone I felt a need to weep, but could not. Why is it that sorrow sometimes makes me burst into tears, whereas at other times, most times, in fact, when I feel that tears would be such a blessed relief, I call on them in vain?

Unable then to give vent to my grief my fever got worse, and a strong headache came on. I asked Stundberger for a drink. This kindly soul was a sergeant in the Vienna police-force who was acting as the Commissary's servant. He was not an old man, but as he was giving me a drink his hand happened to tremble. That tremble reminded me of Schiller, of my beloved Schiller, when on the first day of my arrival at the Spielberg I had demanded the water-jug with imperious pride and he had handed it to me. This memory, strange to say, coming on top of all the others, shattered the flint of my heart, and the tears gushed out.

97

APOLOGIA FOR VON NOE

On the morning of 10 September I embraced my very good friend the Commissary, and set out. We had known each other for hardly a month, yet I felt that he had been a friend of mine for many years. In his nature, attuned to beauty and honesty, there was nothing inquisitorial, nothing artful, not because he did not have the intelligence but because of that love for the noble and straightforward to be found in men of upright character.[1]

In a place where we stopped during our journey someone said to me secretly:

'Be on your guard against that *Guardian Angel* of yours! If he did not belong to the *fallen* ones he'd not have been assigned to you!'

'You're mistaken,' I said. 'I'm quite sure you're mistaken.'

'The craftier ones,' he went on, 'are really those who seem the most simple.'

'If that were so,' I answered, 'you'd never believe in any man's virtue.'

'In some social positions people can be highly refined in manners and education, but not in virtue, no, not in virtue.'

There was nothing I could answer except:

'You exaggerate, my friend, you do indeed.'

'No!' he insisted. 'I'm being logical!'

Then we were interrupted. I was reminded of that dictum of Leibnitz: *Cave a consequentiariis*.[2] The majority of men, unfortunately, reason according to this false and terrifying logic: I follow the standard of A, which, I am certain, is the standard of justice. But that other man follows the standard of B, which,

[1] See footnote, p. 183.

[2] Beware of the conclusions! That is, beware of the man who tries to draw extreme conclusions from his premises.

I am certain, is the standard of injustice. Therefore, he is a wicked man.

But this is the logic of madmen! Whatever may be your standard, do not reason so inhumanly! Remember that once a man starts to reason from any kind of disadvantageous data (and where is the society or the individual who does not have such data?), and then passes with angry rigour from consequence to consequence it is easy for him to reach this conclusion: *With the exception of us four all human beings deserve to be burned alive!* And if a more shrewd scrutiny is made, each of these four will say: *All human beings deserve to be burned alive except me!*

This vulgar rigorism is quite anti-philosophical. A moderate distrust of others may be wise; distrust beyond moderation, never.

As a result of the hint given to me about my *Guardian Angel* I kept him under closer observation, and with every day that passed convinced myself more and more of his harmless and generous nature.

From the moment that a certain order has been established in a society, be it a very good or only a passably good order, every public position in it that is not condemned as infamous by the general conscience, every public position that gives a promise (accepted by a large number of people) of co-operating worthily for the public good, every public position of which it would be absurd to say that no honest men have ever occupied it, every such position may in fact be occupied by honest men.

I read once of a Quaker who looked on all soldiers as an abomination. One day he saw a soldier dive into the Thames to save some wretch from drowning, and said: 'I'll always be a Quaker; but even a soldier can be a good man!'

98

CROSSING THE BRIDGE!

STUNDBERGER accompanied me to the carriage, into which I climbed with the sergeant of gendarmes under whose charge I had been placed. It was raining, and a cold wind blew.

'Wrap yourself up well in your cloak,' Stundberger kept on telling me. 'Cover your head better, and try not to reach home a sick man. It takes so little for you to catch a cold. How sorry I am I cannot offer my services right to Turin!'

He said all this most cordially and in a voice full of emotion.

'From now on,' he added, 'you may never again have a German near you. You may never again hear this language of ours that you Italians find so harsh; and very likely you won't care much! Among Germans you have had so many misfortunes to bear that you won't be very anxious to remember us. Yet I, whose name you will soon forget, I, sir, will always pray for you!'

'And I for you,' I said, grasping his hand for the last time.

The poor man cried out once again:

'*Guten Morgen! Gute Reise! Leben Sie wohl!* (Good day! Happy journey! Take care of yourself!)'

They were the last German words that I heard, and they sounded as sweet in my ears as if they had been said in my own tongue.

I have a passionate love for my native land, but do not hate any other nation. Culture, wealth, power, glory vary from one nation to another; but in every one are souls who are faithful to man's great vocation: to love, to have compassion for, to be of service to his fellow men.

The sergeant who accompanied me told me that he had been one of those who had arrested my poor friend Confalonieri.[1] He recounted how Confalonieri had tried to escape, how the attempt had failed and how, torn from his wife's arms, they

[1] See footnote 2, p. 100, and footnote, p. 157.

had both, though in tears, borne their misfortune with dignity. As I listened to his piteous story I felt myself burning with fever and my heart seemed in the clutch of an iron hand. The narrator was a simple man who told his story with trustful friendliness; he did not notice that, though I had nothing against him personally, I could not prevent a shudder of horror at the sight of those hands of his that had been laid on my friend.

At Buffalora he had breakfast; I was too deeply afflicted and took nothing. Once upon a time, in years long past, when I was on holiday at Arluno[1] with Count Porro's children, I sometimes happened to walk to Buffalora along the banks of the Ticino.[2] Now I felt a surge of pride at sight of the fine bridge, whose material I had seen strewn along the Lombard side of the river, when the common opinion at the time had been that the work would never be carried out. With joy I crossed that river once again and stepped on to Piedmontese soil. Yes, though it is true that I love all nations, yet God alone knows how deeply I love Italy most; and though I am so enamoured of Italy, God alone knows how much more sweetly for me than the name of any other part of it rings the name of Piedmont, land of my fathers.

99

HOME AT LAST!

At San Martino, which is opposite to Buffalora, the Lombard sergeant spoke with the Piedmontese gendarmes; then he bade me goodbye and went back across the bridge.

'Take me to Novara,' I said to the coachman.

'Would you be good enough to wait a minute or two?' asked one of the gendarmes.

[1] Some twelve miles from Milan.

[2] The River Ticino leaves Lago Maggiore at Sesto Calende, and flowing S.S.E. joins the Po south of Pavia. The 'fine bridge' over the Ticino mentioned by Pellico is the Ponte Nuovo of Buffalora.

I saw that I was not yet free and this made me sad, for I was afraid that it might delay my arrival home. But after more than a quarter of an hour a man appeared and asked me if he could travel to Novara with me. He had missed another chance; now there was no other carriage but mine going: so he would be very relieved if I would let him make use of it, and so on and so forth.

This *carabiniere* in disguise turned out to be a man of pleasant humour, so that he kept me good company all the way to Novara. When we reached our destination, however, under pretence of wanting to alight at an hotel he got the coachman to drive us to the police barracks where I was told that a bed was ready for me in the room of one of the sergeants, and that we had to await orders from higher up.

Thinking that I should be allowed to set out again next morning, I got into bed and after chatting for some time with my sergeant-host I fell into a deep sleep. It was a long time since I had slept so well!

I awoke about dawn and got up at once; but the early hours dragged. I had breakfast, chatted with my host, glanced at his books, walked about the room and on to the balcony, and at last was told I had a visitor. This was a very polite official[1] who had come to give me news of my father and to tell me that a letter from him was awaiting me at Novara, and would soon be brought to me. I was deeply obliged to him for his friendly act of kindness.

Some hours went by which seemed an eternity to me before the letter arrived. And, oh, what was my joy to see my father's beloved handwriting! What joy to learn that my mother, my dearest mother, was still alive! And so were my two brothers and the elder of my sisters! But my younger sister, that same Marietta who had entered the Visitation convent and of whom news had reached me clandestinely in prison, she, alas, had been dead nine months.

It is sweet to think that I owe my freedom to all those who

[1] This was Count Giuseppe di Capriglio, who revealed his name to Pellico when he had read what Pellico had written about him in his memoirs.

in their love for me had prayed unceasingly for me to God, and in particular to this sister of mine who had died with every sign of most sincere devoutness. May God reward her for all the sorrows that she bore in her heart because of my misfortunes!

The days went by, but no permission came for me to leave Novara.

At last, on the morning of 16 September, I was granted the necessary permission, and all surveillance over me by the police ceased. So for the first time in all those years I was free to go anywhere I liked without the company of guards![1]

I got together some money, was kindly treated by an acquaintance of my father's, and set out about three o'clock that afternoon. My travelling companions were a lady, a merchant, an engraver, and two young artists, one of whom was deaf and dumb. These artists came from Rome; and I was delighted to hear that they knew Maroncelli's family. It is a consolation to be able to talk about those we love with someone who is not indifferent to them.

We spent that night at Vercelli. The happy morning of 17 September dawned. We continued on our way. But how slow carriages are! We did not reach Turin until nightfall.

What man can ever describe the joy in my heart and in the hearts of those dear to me when I saw them again, when I embraced once more my father, my mother, my brothers? My beloved sister Giuseppina was not with them, for duty kept her at Chieri,[2] but on hearing of my happy arrival she made haste to come home for a few days. In the arms once again of these five dear objects of tender affection I was, and I am, to be envied far above all other men.

For my past misfortunes, then, and for my present content-

[1] Pellico, however, must have known that the Austrian authorities would continue to keep him very much under their paternal eyes. He may not have been aware of it when he penned these words, but the authorities were actually opening all letters addressed to him long after he found himself without guards.

[2] A small country town some miles outside Turin. Pellico's sister was Mother Superior of a convent there. (Introduction, p. xix.)

ment as well as for all the good and for all the evil[1] that the future may hold in store for me, may that divine Providence be blessed in whose hands all men and all things are, willy-nilly, wondrous means that God knows how to use for ends worthy of Himself!

[1] All the evil that the future held in store for Pellico was, mercifully, hidden from his eyes as he brought his story to an end. (Introduction, p. xvii et seq.)

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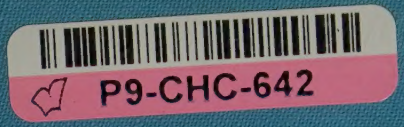
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